

"THEIR GIPSY FRIEND'S SECRET!"

Dramatic LONG COMPLETE Cliff House School Story inside.

THE SCHOOLGIRL

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Incorporating
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



TO SAVE HER ENEMY—

Little Gipsy Jill Risks All!

See this week's grand long complete story of Barbara Redfern & Co.

An Appealing Long Complete story, showing how Barbara Redfern & Co. of Cliff House School eventually learned—

THEIR GIPSY FRIEND'S SECRET!



Gipsy Jill Comes to School!



"HALLO! Somebody in a hurry!" commented Clara Trevlyn.

"Yes?" said Barbara Redfern disinterestedly.

"And somebody," Clara went on, gazing keenly, "from Cliff House. Looks like a senior girl."

"Ur-r-rur!" Mabel Lynn murmured drowsily.

"And she's coming this way," Clara Trevlyn went on.

"Say, can't you ever relax?" grumbled Leila Carroll, the American girl. "Who cares, anyway? Shove over, Rolypolyskins!"

But from "Rolypolyskins," otherwise plump Bessie Bunter, came nothing but a vibrant snore. Bessie was blissfully asleep.

The scene was the hill known as Abbot's Camp, near the leafy woods of Friardale village. The time was five o'clock on the hottest half-holiday of the year. The five Cliff House girls, all members of the Fourth Form, were stretched out on the slopes of the hill, enjoying a well-earned rest after their long walk along the coast from the fishing village of Sarmouth.

Overhead the sun beat down with undiminished brilliance and vigour. Hardly a leaf stirred in the woods, for there was no breeze. Lazily content, they lay with their faces upturned to the sun, glad, after the long walk, to rest their tired limbs.

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Only Clara Trevlyn, the energetic Tomboy, was sitting up. Her attention was concentrated upon the breathless figure which, emerging from the woods, had come hurrying down the footpath to the left of the hill.

She was too far away then for her features to be clearly distinguishable. But the Cliff House hat and blazer she wore were easily recognisable, and her height gave her away at once as one of the senior girls.

As Clara watched she suddenly stopped, looking about her. Her voice, not strong, but carrying far in that still air, reached the Tomboy's ears:

"Ooo-ee! Ooo-eee! Deena! Deena!"

"Deena?" frowned Clara. "Who the dickens is Deena, Babs?"

"Deanna Durbin!" Barbara Redfern, Fourth Form captain, murmured sleepily. "Schoolgirl film star—eh? What are you chattering about, you old nuisance?"

"Some Cliff House girl is calling Deena," Clara said. "Hallo! She's coming on again. I say, Babs, it's Audrey Verner! Fancy her exerting herself on a day like this!"

Babs sighed. Resignedly she sat up, blinking as she opened her eyes to the strong rays of the sun. She gazed along the footpath, and then she blinked again at the hurrying, almost running figure which was speeding towards them. Audrey Dashwood Verner, the normally bored and languid aristocrat of the Sixth, it was. Surprising to see her stepping out with such agitated vigour on a hot afternoon like this!

"Deena!" Audrey called again.

"Deena?" Babs said. "My hat, that's

the name of Miss Primrose's dog! Aud-rey!" she cried. "Coo-ee, Audrey!"

Audrey Verner, a hundred yards away now, paused. She looked round. Babs' cry brought Mabel Lynn to a sitting posture. Leila, with a weary groan, raised herself up. Then Audrey spotted them. She waved an eager hand, and came hurrying towards them.

"I say," she panted, "Barbara, have you seen Deena, Miss Primrose's dog?"

"Well, I saw him yesterday being exercised by Boker," Babs said. "But why are you worrying about Primmy's pet?"

Audrey bit her lip. She was so agitated that she even forgot to change her "r's" into "w's"—a little superior habit of hers when she remembered to play the aristocrat which she was so fond of affecting.

"I—I took him out this afternoon," she said, "and—and—well, he suddenly tore himself away to chase after a rabbit—lead and all!"

"And you lost him?" Clara asked.

"Yes."

"Did Primmy know you'd taken him out?"

"Well, no," Audrey looked away. "I—I just took him out," she said. "Oh dear! You're sure you haven't seen him?"

Clara sniffed. She thought she could guess why Audrey, always anxious to draw attention to herself, had borrowed the headmistress' distinguished Borzoi dog without permission—simply, of course, as an addition to her own glory.

"And does Primmy know now?" Babs asked.

"Y-yes!" Audrey faltered. "I went

back to the school, but he hadn't returned. That—that's why I'm searching for him. Bothered if I know why she makes such a fuss of a silly dog!" she added peevishly. "I—I say, please do help me to find him!" she entreated. "If you do, I—I'll give you ten shillings!"

"Hey?" Bessie asked, bobbing up like a jack-in-the-box. "Who says she'll give me ten shillings?"

"Don't get excited, old Roly-poly-skis!" Leila Carroll advised. "We don't want your ten shillings, Audrey!" she added scornfully. "At the same time, Deena's lost. I guess it's up to us to help find him—just for Primmy and the bow-wow's sake! Where did he bolt?"

"In the woods."

"Right-ho! Let's get going." Resignedly the chums rose. Audrey gulped her relief. With Bessie trailing in the rear, they set off towards the woods.

"Now," Babs said, when they reached the outer copse, "we'd better split up. Audrey, you go south, will you? Clara, will you and Leila go along with her? Mabs, Bessie, and I will go north."

They split up. Babs and her two close chums—they were study-mates together—took the narrow, grass-grown path that led to the old quarry workings. At intervals they stopped to shout and listen. Then suddenly—

"Listen!" thrilled Babs.

She halted in a clump of hawthorns. For in answer to her last shout had sounded a sudden glad bark.

"It's the dog, Mabs!"

"Deena!" Mabel Lynn cried. "Deena, boy, where are you?"

"Wuff!" came the bark. "Wuff!" And it was followed by an exclamation in a human voice.

"Hallo, seems as if he's found already," Babs said. "But come on! In the clearing over there!"

They pressed forward, running now. And then, bursting through the trees which fringed the clearing, they halted. Deena, the sleek, cream-coloured borzoi, was there—but Deena was not unaccompanied. A little girl stood before him, lying back on the lead which was still attached to his collar, and tugging frenziedly as he would have darted forward to meet the Cliff House girls. Sharply, inquiringly, Babs regarded the girl.

There was something about her which compelled immediate attention. Rather like Marcelle Biquet of the Fourth Form, Babs thought. She had the same very dark hair, the same tanned colouring, the same deep blue eyes, the same small stature. But unlike Marcelle, she was dressed in garments which, though neat and clean, were most pitifully patched and frayed. She was, Babs judged, about twelve or thirteen.

She eyed the three chums uneasily as they came up.

"Hallo!" Babs said.

"Hallo!" the girl returned. "Is—is this your dog?"

"That is our headmistress' dog," Babs corrected. "Did you find him?"

"Yes, I found him. He had his foot in a rabbit snare!" The girl looked down at the foot in question, which Babs now saw was covered with a neat little bandage.

"He's not really hurt," she volunteered. "But he might have broken his leg, the way he was struggling, if I hadn't come along. But here you are," she added, surrendering the lead to Babs. "As he's yours you can take him. Nice dog, though, isn't he?" she added, her face melting into the first smile. "He's called a borzoi, isn't he?"

By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER.

"That's it," Babs laughed, and then put out her hand as the little girl, moving towards a basket which stood on the ground, picked it up. "I—I say, don't go—please! You haven't told us your name."

"Jill Smith."

"Where do you live?"

"Over there!" The girl nodded nonchalantly towards the opposite side of the clearing. "I'm a gipsy," she volunteered simply. "I live with my aunt and my uncle in a caravan. They are gipsies, too. Good-bye, doggie," she said, and putting an arm round delighted Deena's neck, hugged him and held her face for the great wet kiss with which the dog saluted her. "Good-bye, young ladies," she added shyly.

But Babs put a hand on her shoulder.

"No! Wait a minute! We can't let you go like that!" In spite of herself she felt attracted towards the youngster; felt some deep stirrings of pity. Certainly Gipsy Jill, young as she was, looked very capable of taking care of herself, but she was so obviously poor, so dreadfully in need of clothes, and looked, somehow, as if she had been made for such better things, that Babs

The little gipsy girl of Friardale Woods made a great appeal to Barbara Redfern & Co. Such a lovable little character. Amazingly enough, that haughty Sixth Former, Audrey Verner, wanted to help Gipsy Jill as well—until one tiny incident occurred. And then—why did Audrey scheme to blacken the little gipsy's name, keep her away from the school?

felt a strange reluctance to let her out of her sight.

"You know you've done us a jolly good turn," she said warmly, "and we'd like to do one for you. Er—" she fumbled in her pocket.

Gipsy Jill's face turned scarlet.

"Thank you, but I don't want money, if that's what you mean," she said. "I only did what I did because I like dogs! And please do let me go now, because Gipsy George will be after me, you know—Gipsy George is my uncle."

She looked worriedly at her basket, which was filled with pegs and pin-cushions and little wood carvings and pieces of lace-work and tapestry.

"Good-bye!" she added abruptly, and started at a run towards the trees.

Deena, in Babs' grip now, gave an eager whine.

"Whoa, boy, down," Babs said. She looked at Mabs and Bessie. "I say, we can't let the little thing go like that," she murmured uncomfortably. "We ought to do—Hallo," she added, with a quick start.

They tensed, gazing in the direction of the trees through which the little gipsy girl had disappeared. From beyond those trees came a man's gruff voice.

"Wasting time, are you? I saw you talking to them girls from the big school. And what do you mean—with a threatening note—bringing all that stuff back? Didn't I tell you to sell it all?"

"And I tried to sell it," came back Gipsy Jill's defiant voice. "But I can't sell things people won't buy, can

I? I took two shillings!" she added spiritedly.

"Two shillings? Two?" the man's voice was a growl. "You don't try—that's what's the matter with you. What you want, my girl, is a taste of the strap—and that's what you'll get if you don't look lively! Two shillings! Bah—"

There came the sound of a smack. It was followed by a cry of pain in Jill's voice.

Plump Bessie glowered indignantly. "Oh, I say, you know, that brute hit her!"

"Come on!" Babs said between her teeth.

Her face was grim as she started forward, the borzoi eagerly tugging her into a run. She reached the trees and plunged among them, and then stopped as she saw the scene in front of her. Little Jill, her face hot and smarting, was facing a hulk of a man in a dirty jersey and a growth of black beard.

"Now cry!" the man growled. "Go on! Then I'll land you another!"

"You—you bully!" Babs cried.

"Hey?" He swivelled round. "Ho!" he added, eyeing Babs; and paused uncertainly as Mabs and Bessie followed on to the scene. "Ho!" he said, for the second time, and then his expression relaxed. "Hallo, young leddies!" he said affably. "Fren's o' yours, Jill?" he added.

Jill eyed them in wonder.

"You were hitting her!" Babs accused.

"Hitting who? Jill?" the man went off into a roar of unconvincing laughter. "Hitting? You don't call that hitting? That was just play, wasn't it, Jill? As if," he said virtuously, "I would hit my little Jill, the apple of my eye and the cream of my life! I may be a bit rough at times, but bless you, leddies, I'd as soon of thought of clouting Jill as I would of chinning myself. Gentler than the lamb, that's my motto!"

Babs eyed him scornfully. She was not deceived. If she had been sorry for the gipsy girl before, her heart positively ached for her now that she saw what a bully of a man her uncle was. She couldn't leave her like that! She just couldn't! Though Jill was brave enough to face up to him, she could see quite plainly that the little girl was inwardly terrified.

"Jill!" she said, seized with a sudden inspiration.

"Oh dear, yes—yes, miss?"

"We—we thought we'd like to have a look at the things you've got to sell," Babs said. "And we thought perhaps you'd like to bring them along with you to our school."

Jill's eyes opened wide.

"Your school?" she asked. "That big school with the lovely lawns and the ivy on the walls?"

"That's it," Babs laughed. "And ever so many girls," she reminded her; "girls who'd just love those pin-cushions and things! Would you like to come, Jill?"

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Would she? The sudden rapture in the little one's face answered the question.

Uncle George, a gleam in his eyes, beamed.

"She would," he said, and darted a look at the girl as if daring her to contradict. "Now, Jilly, my child, you just hoof it with these fine young leddies—and mind you take that basket with you! Don't be in any hurry," he added generously, "aunt and me'll have a nice hot supper for you when you get back."

He nodded jovially, and turned away. Jill gulped.

"You—you don't mean that, miss?" she asked Babs.

"But we do!" Babs said.

"But—but—" Jill bit her lip, her eyes were swimming then. "Oh dear, I—I can't go!" she said. "I couldn't go to such a fine place. You'd be ashamed of me."

Babs' answer to that was to take her right arm, while Mabs, at the same time, took her other arm. Bessie beamed as she relieved Babs of Deena's lead, and, together with Jill, still feebly protesting, they walked off.

In a very short time, the gates of Cliff House came into view, and at the gates, talking anxiously with Clara Trevlyn and Leila Carroll, was Audrey Dashwood Verner. She gave a rapturous squeal as she saw them.

"Babs, you've found him!"

"Not so," Babs said. "This is the girl who did the finding—and probably saved Deena from a broken leg at the same time! Jill should have the thanks!"

"Jill?" Audrey turned to the little gipsy girl. "You?" she asked.

"Yes, miss," Jill said shyly.

"Oh!" Audrey beamed. She opened her handbag. "Then, thank you! I'm very grateful. Take this," she added, and grandly fluttered a ten-shilling note into the little gipsy's face.

But Jill, her face crimsoning, drew back.

"No—no thank you, miss! I—I don't want that money!"

"No? What a strange little creature you are! Well, well, far be it from me to hurt your feelings. But I must do something, you know—" Audrey paused, studying the girl again, and then suddenly frowning. "Do I know you?" she asked. "I seem to remember seeing you somewhere before!"

"No, miss," Jill said.

"H'm!" Audrey frowned again. Then she smiled. Very gracious and very grateful the smile, and Jill, half scared by her magnificence as she was, tremulously smiled back. When Audrey wasn't being affected or putting on airs, there was something very charming about her. "Well, if you won't take my money," she said, "you must certainly let me do something else for you. Have you had your tea?"

"Tea? Nun-no, miss!" Gipsy Jill stuttered.

"Then let's all have tea," Audrey cried, "in the tuckshop. I'll stand treat!"

"Whoopie!" cheered Leila.

"You'll all come?"

"Crumbs, just won't we!" plump Bessie beamed.

"Right-ho! Then off we go!" Audrey said. "But, wait a minute! First, I'd better report back to Miss Primrose that Deena is safe and sound. I expect she's throwing a fit by this time—"

"Which," said a voice, "is a very disrespectful and ungracious remark, Audrey!" And Audrey, twisting round, gulped as she saw Miss Primrose. "At the same time," Miss Prim-

rose added, glancing towards Deena, "I am glad indeed that you have found my dog! Deena!" she said fondly, and patted the dog's head, while Deena, with every evidence of joy, reared up and thrust a pink tongue towards her dignified face. "Please, Deena! Phoo! That is enough!" Miss Primrose gasped. "Audrey, where exactly did you find him?"

Audrey flushed.

"Well, I—I didn't," she said.

"Indeed?"

"It was this little girl here," Audrey confessed. "She found him—in the woods!"

And while Miss Primrose bent her eyes upon the shabbily clothed waif of Friardale Woods, Gipsy Jill flushed as if her face were on fire.

First Suspicions!



"BUT, my dear, that was very resourceful, and very, very kind of you," Miss Primrose said when, pressed for details once again, Jill had blurted them out, "and, of course, if you wish to dispose of your wares here among the girls of the school, as Barbara suggests, I cannot have any possible objection. Indeed," Miss Primrose added, her eyes going to the basket, "I am in need of a pin-cushion myself. May I look at one or two?"

Babs gurgled. Mabs grinned delightedly. Audrey, relieved again, beamed with expansive good humour.

DO YOU REMEMBER FAITH ASHTON

Barbara Redfern's amazingly pretty but cunningly treacherous cousin, who not long ago robbed Babs of the Fourth Form captaincy? In next week's story Faith returns to Cliff House, the same subtle schemer . . .

"But these," exclaimed the headmistress, taking up two exquisitely worked chair backs, "are charming bits of work! Who did them, Jill?"

"Please, miss, I did," Jill said shyly.

"You? But, my dear, they are beautiful! Where did you learn to do such work?"

"My aunty taught me," Jill said. "I never do very much more than make pin-cushions and weave tapestries, you see. That's my job in the camp. Aunty Agnes used to help me until she found I could do the work by myself, but now she helps Uncle George to make the pegs."

There was a little pause while Miss Primrose critically studied the work again. Every stitch of it bore the hallmark of perfect craftsmanship. She frowned a little, thinking of those priceless tapestry curtains of hers, which, damaged by fire a few months ago, she had not been able to have repaired yet.

"I see," she said. "H'm! Jill, will you please come and see me before you leave the school? I have something to show you which might interest you. I will take these two chair backs, and also this pin-cushion. How much are they?"

"Well, miss, we charge a shilling each for the backs, and sixpence for the cushion," Jill said hesitatingly.

"But, my dear child, that is ridiculous! It must have taken you days to work these!"

"It did!" Jill confessed. "But that's the price my uncle makes me charge.

Please—please don't give me any more," she begged.

Miss Primrose smiled. She selected the coins from her bag. With another smile at the little gipsy girl she turned back up the drive, beckoning Babs to accompany her.

Babs followed her.

"Barbara, I would like to talk to you for a few minutes," Miss Primrose said, "about the little gipsy girl. She seems to be an extraordinary little creature for one of her type—very proud and very independent in spite of her poverty. You do not know much about her circumstances, I gather?"

"No, Miss Primrose, only what she has told you," Babs replied.

"And this aunt and uncle?"

"I haven't met the aunt, but the uncle is a brute," Babs said bluntly.

"Poor child!" Miss Primrose pursed her lips. "I was thinking, Barbara, that if the matter could be arranged with her aunt and her uncle she might come to the school each day and mend those Norman tapestries of mine. You remember them, don't you? But first I should be glad if you could prevail upon her to accept a little present of some clothes. Her own, though neat, are so frightfully shabby. There is a whole basket of clothes in No. 1 Attic which I am saving for an orphan's home in London. Let her take her choice from those, Barbara."

"Oh, Miss Primrose, how nice of you!"

"Not at all. You will see, Barbara, that she comes to me before she leaves?"

"Oh, yes, Miss Primrose."

With a gracious nod, the headmistress walked away, leaving Babs glowing. What a dear Miss Primrose was—and how perfectly splendid to be able to help the little gipsy with her full approval!

She fairly danced back to join Jill and the others. Then, at Audrey's suggestion, they all crowded into the tuckshop. There Audrey immediately claimed the largest table. With a return of her old haughty arrogance she ordered the tea.

And what a tea it was, to be sure! Audrey, one of the richest girls in the Sixth, never believed in doing things by halves, and now, just to show off and impress the gipsy girl, she spent lavishly. Pies, tarts, salads, creams, blanc mange! Jill stared in awe.

"Is—is this what you call tea?" she asked.

"Certainly!" Audrey drawled. "At least, this is what I call tea. Dash the expense, you know. What will you have, Jill?"

"Oh, please may I have some of that lovely white bread-and-butter?" Jill asked.

"Bread-and-butter! But what about some—"

"No, please, bread-and-butter," Jill said wistfully. "I like bread-and-butter, this sort of bread-and-butter. Aunty makes our bread in camp, you see, and it's always so hard, and we always have margarine. Oh, this is lovely!" she sighed, as she sank her little white teeth into a slice.

Audrey beamed. Babs laughed. They were all in high feather—all most deliciously sharing the enjoyment of the little gipsy girl.

Girls came and went in the tuckshop as they ate, and all, hearing the story of Jill, had a cheery word for Jill and a smile for Jill. And many of them bought something from Jill, so that even before the meal ended half the basket was empty.

By that time, of course, the news had spread. Other girls, eager and curious to see and talk to the gipsy girl in whom

Miss Primrose was interested, came crowding around. In another hour Jill had sold almost everything in her basket.

It was an almost dazedly delighted Jill who at last found herself in Study No. 4 in the Fourth Form corridor, which room was shared by Babs, Mabs, and Bessie.

"Oh dear, I—I can hardly believe this is all true!" she breathed. "I know I shall wake up in a minute and find myself in camp again. I—I had no idea rich girls could be so nice!"

"We're not all rich girls, you know, Jill," Babs smiled. "A good many of us, like you, have been through the mill. You like the school?" she added, her eyes twinkling.

"Oh, I—I love it!" breathed Jill.

"Like to be a scholar here—what?" Audrey asked.

"Oh, I could never be clever enough for that!" Jill said shyly. "And—and it would be too much like a dream come true."

"But wouldn't you like to be dressed like the girls you've seen?" Babs put in swiftly.

Jill turned pink. "Well, of course I would. Who wouldn't?" she asked. "But"—and she looked sadly at her shabby rags—"I'll never be able to do that."

"No?" Babs laughed. "Supposing, for instance, I gave you a dress?"

"Oh, but Miss Redfern, I couldn't take it!"

"But why not?" Babs asked. "Jill, please," she added appealingly, "just to please me! You'd like to come to see us again, wouldn't you—and you would like to come dressed for the occasion, wouldn't you? Audrey," she added quickly, "will you take Jill to the Fourth Form dormitory?"

Audrey smiled. For answer she took Jill's hand.

"Come on, kid!" she said.

And while Babs, with a laugh, darted off, Audrey, beaming, led the happily bewildered gipsy girl out of the study.

"Miss Redfern is so kind, isn't she?" she asked of Audrey.

"Vewy," Audrey nodded. "Babs is a good sport. You like her, Jill?"

"Oh, ever so much, Miss Verner!"

"And me—you like me, too?" Audrey asked, and wondered vaguely why she should be so anxious to hear her answer "Yes."

Jill pressed her hand.

"I—I like you as much as—as Miss Redfern," she answered softly, and her face turned red. "You know, it's funny," Jill said, "but although you're ever such a rich girl, and so much bigger and important and cleverer than I can ever hope to be, I sort of feel I've known you always, you know!"

Funny! Audrey gazed at her sharply. Why, that was exactly what she was feeling herself! Again her heart warmed towards Jill. What a sweet kid she was! If only she could do something more for her! Wouldn't it be fun, she thought, having her always at Cliff House School?

And for a moment she actually toyed with the idea of writing to her uncle, Mason Verner, making some sort of proposition of that nature.

And then immediately, as the more selfish side of her nature came uppermost, she pulled herself up sharply. No, not that. That was being just silly. Her Uncle Mason, soft-natured and sentimental as he was, might be too strongly influenced by a child like this. Uncle Mason had a weakness for children of Jill's age.

He had spoken more than once, to Audrey's dismay, of adopting a girl like this—just to remind him of that dear daughter of his whom he had lost in that tragic railway accident at Ashenford twelve years ago.

It was to the loss of that daughter that she owed her own position now. For if Anne Verner had not been killed in that dreadful disaster her uncle would never have adopted her, and she, so far from being the heiress to the Mason Verner millions, would at this moment probably have been working for her own living.

"Well, here's the dormitory," she said brightly. She pushed the door open, and Gipsy Jill stood gaping in awe at

the snowy white beds, the spotless wash-stands, and the diamond-paned windows through which the waning sun now crimsonly poured. "This is where the girls of the Fourth sleep, you know," Audrey said loftily.

"In those beds?" said Jill, still staring.

"Why, of course, you funny little thing! Don't you sleep in a bed?"

"Well, yes," Jill said; "but not like these. I don't think I should ever, ever wake up if I slept in a lovely bed like that," she said sighingly. "It—it's lovely!"

"Lovely, is it?" sang a laughing voice at the door, and into the room rushed Barbara, a pile of clothes on her arm. "Whoops! Here we are!" she cried, her eyes shining. "I've enough clothes here, Jill, to rig you out for a twelvemonth. Now, tell me how you like this frock."

"Oh, Miss Redfern, that—that's never for me!" breathed Jill.

"It is—rather!" Babs laughed. "And here's a tunic to go over it—just like all of us wear at Cliff House. And here's a hat. It hasn't got a badge, but we'll put a new ribbon on it, and it'll look fine. And here's a petticoat, and shoes and stockings. Now, come on, Jill, off with those clothes of yours!"

She laughed at Audrey, who smiled. Jill, trembling with eagerness, her eyes shining so brightly that it seemed for a moment that she would burst into tears, looked shyly at the door, and then tremblingly drew her ragged frock above her head.

"Here, let me help!" offered Audrey. She stepped forward. While Jill, breathless, struggled with the frock, she pulled it off. With a laugh, Jill's little face bobbed out of the entangling garment, and Babs was faintly shocked to see that underneath that frock she wore nothing except a much-mended little underskirt.

And yet she was a sturdy little figure, and Babs noticed, with inward amazement, that her flesh, in contrast to the tan of her face, was most extraordinarily white.



ANGRILY Babs faced the gipsy. "You—you bully!" she cried. "You were hitting her!" Bessie Bunter's arm was about the little gipsy's shoulders. The three chums were determined to protect her.

"Jill, what's that?" she asked, pointing to an arrow-shaped mark high on the girl's upper arm. "You haven't hurt yourself?"

"That?" Jill laughed. "No; that's a birthmark," she said. "I—I've always had that, you know." And then she blinked at Audrey, who had moved round so that she could see that mark, and a quick look of concern flashed into her eyes. "Oh, Miss Verner," she cried anxiously, "how white you've gone! You're not ill, are you?"

For Audrey Dashwood Verner, with a sudden burning-eyed expression that frightened the little gipsy, was staring at her as if she had suddenly seen a ghost.

Mysterious Audrey!



QUICKLY Barbara glanced up; quickly looked at Audrey. She was just in time to see the Sixth Former shake her head and stiffen.

And then, while the little gipsy girl's eyes, wide with amazement, were still upon her, she laughed.

But it was a queer, unnatural laugh. "Ill!" she said. "Ill! Oh, Jill, what a perfectly quaint child you are! Of course I'm not ill! Of course not!" she repeated, and in so strained a voice that Babs stared. "I—I just remembered something—some—some frightfully important phone message I ought to have made this morning. It—it rather gave me a start, you know; that's all. Babs, you will look after Jill, won't you?" she added. "I must fly—simply must!" And she rushed from the dormitory.

Babs blinked. That was a little queer, she thought.

"Oh, Barbara, she—she's not cross with me, is she?" Jill blurted anxiously.

"Not she!" Babs laughed. "Now, hold still. There you are. Now, put those shoes on and have a look at yourself!" And she drew away while Jill, having put on the new shoes, breathlessly took a look at her reflection in the full-length mirror. "There now!" Babs glowed. "How's that?"

"Oh, Miss Redfern, I—I can't believe that it is me!" Jill breathed.

And certainly, comparing this radiant little figure with the gipsy girl of a few minutes before, that was not hard to understand.

"It's you all right!" Babs laughed. "And for goodness' sake, old thing, don't call me Miss Redfern! Call me Babs. But, now, let's do these up into a parcel, shall we?" she added, stooping to pick up the gipsy's old garments from the floor. "Then I'll take you along to Miss Primrose. She wants to see you before you go, you know. But what's the matter?" she asked, in quick concern.

For as she lifted the ragged dress, Jill had stepped forward concernedly. She put her hand upon the dress as it rested on Babs' arm.

"I—there—there's something in the pocket," she said awkwardly.

"Oh!" Babs smiled. She handed the frock over, turning to her own locker to rummage inside it for a piece of brown paper. When she turned back again Jill was in the act of folding the carefully patched frock, apparently having transferred whatever it was she had been so anxious about. Together, then, they made up the parcel. With Babs glowingly proud and pleased of her new charge, they marched off to Study No. 4. Frances Frost, whom they met on their way, paused.

"Hallo! A new girl?" she asked curiously regarding Jill.

"Not exactly!" chuckled Babs.

"Well, my hat!" Frances breathed.

"I see now! Gipsy Jill!"

Babs laughed. Jill turned a pleased crimson. Her little heart swelled with pride then. She, the vagrant wanderer of the woods and the wayside, now actually mistaken for one of those fine schoolgirls!

And what excited comments and good feeling there was when she reached Study No. 4, where Mabs, Bessie, Leila Carroll, Marjorie Hazeldene, Janet Jordan, and Clara Trevlyn had gathered to meet her! What dear girls all these were! And how she loved them all! But she was just a little disappointed because Audrey Verner was not there.

"And now," Babs said, "to Miss Primrose, Jill. She wants to see you."

"Yes, B-Babs," Jill said, using Babs' pet nickname a little shyly.

She followed Babs, as the captain of the Fourth Form led the way out of the study. In awe and wonder she gazed around her as they went along. Miss Primrose's study was reached. Miss Primrose herself, seated behind her magnificent mahogany desk in a room which struck the gipsy girl as being akin to a palace, beamed with benevolent tenderness as she entered.

"Ah!" she said, and her eyes approvingly surveyed the trim, upright little figure in the dress. "Really, Jill, my dear, you look like one of my own girls!"

"Yes, Miss Primrose. Thank you, Miss Primrose!" Jill gulped.

"You have shown her round the school, Barbara?" Miss Primrose asked.

"Not yet, Miss Primrose. But she's seen quite a bit of it, haven't you, Jill?"

"Oh, yes, Miss Primrose, and—and I think it's lovely!" Jill breathed.

The headmistress smiled.

"Then, perhaps," she suggested, "you would like to come again, Jill?"

"Er—" She stopped. From behind the desk she produced a faded tapestry curtain, at the sight of which Jill's eyes lit up with interest. "I—I had an idea, my dear, as you are so extremely clever with your needle, that you might like to repair this for me."

And Miss Primrose unfolded the curtain, pointing out several rather formidable holes near the fringe. "I am afraid it is in rather a sad mess at the moment, but I am very fond of the curtain, apart from which it is not without value as an antique. Perhaps it is rather too difficult, however?"

"But I could mend that!" Jill said, her eyes shining. "Miss Primrose, I could! Of course," she added doubtfully, "it would take a long time. I should have to be ever so careful in following the pattern."

"You'd like to try?" Miss Primrose asked.

"Oh, yes, please!"

"Then," Miss Primrose said, "you shall. Barbara, here, will make arrangements with you—ah—uncle for you to come to the school every morning. Barbara, I really think Jill might work in the empty study in the Sixth Form corridor. Naturally," Miss Primrose added, "if you do the work to my satisfaction, I shall reward you—and, in the meantime, if you like, you may still sell your wares in the school. I shall expect you here tomorrow," she added graciously. "Good-bye, now."

Jill, almost dazed, left. She was quivering with happiness then. She had no fear that Uncle George would

refuse her permission—Uncle George never turned down money in any shape or form! And, oh, wouldn't it be just too lovely to come here day after day, to meet these girls, to be with them, to see Audrey.

Treading on air, she went out. And then, in the passage, she gave a little cry of joy. For who should come walking along as if to meet them but Audrey herself!

"Oh, Miss Verner!" she cried.

Audrey stopped. Her face melted into a smile.

"Oh!" she said. "Hallo! I—I was just looking for you. I suppose you're going back to your camp now?"

"Yes, Miss Verner, but—"

"I wish you luck," Audrey said. "I'm sorry we shan't be seeing you again."

"Then," Babs laughed, "save your sorrow! Because, you see, we shall all be seeing Jill again. She's coming to the school every day for some time."

"What!" cried Audrey.

"Miss Primrose has—has given me a job to do!" Jill ventured.

"A job?" Audrey stared, and Babs stared, too, at the most extraordinary expression which had overspread the senior's face. For a moment she was filled with mild amazement. For a moment she found herself wondering once more. "A job!" Audrey repeated sharply. "But that's ridiculous! Why should you come here every day?"

Jill's eyes opened wide.

"Oh, Miss Verner, d-don't you want me to come?"

"No!" Audrey snapped. "I mean—Oh goodness!" And she coloured furiously then as she realised the unguarded admission which her surprised consternation had allowed to slip out. She bit her lip. "Well, of—of course, I don't mean that," she said, in a tone which belied the words. "I—I'm jolly pleased, really. But—but I don't understand. What sort of job?"

Babs explained.

"Oh!" said Audrey. "Oh!" she repeated, and sounded so worried that Jill stared. "Well, in—in that case," she decided, "there's no need for me to wish you good-bye. I—I'll just wish you luck instead."

And before the astonished Jill could say another word, she had turned on her heel and whisked away.

She left two very surprised girls behind her.

"Oh, Miss Redfern, what's the matter with her?" Jill faltered.

"Oh, nothing!" Babs said. "Nothing at all!"

But she wondered and was angry.

She was still wondering, and was still angry when, later, she and her chums accompanied Jill back to the gipsy encampment, and in the distance she saw Audrey as if following them.

And she wondered more furiously than ever when, arrangements most satisfactorily settled with Gipsy George and Aunt Agnes, she and her chums were taking leave of the gipsies and suddenly espied a Cliff House figure crouching behind a hedge, her whole attention concentrated on the camp!

"Look!" she breathed to Mabs.

"Audrey Verner!" Mabs cried, with a start. "What is she doing here? And why," she breathed, "doesn't she want to be seen?"

But Babs to that did not reply. She was pondering the answer to those same questions herself.

Audrey Verner's behaviour ever since she had rushed out of the dormitory had been quite baffling.

Why?

"You Little Thief!"



"NICE clothes," Gipsy George said approvingly. "Nice friends you've made at the big school! Good business selling out like that, Jill! Your Uncle George is pleased with you."

"And auntie," Aunt Agnes said, with a smile whose effect was rather marred by the conspicuous space where her two front teeth should have been. "Come here, Jill, my lassie, and have some more soup. Your friends seem very fond of you," she added cunningly.

Jill flushed.

"Give you things, too, don't they?" Gipsy George inquired, waving away an eddy of blue smoke from the wood fire in front of which he sat. "Give you 'eaps and 'eaps of things, maybe. Things mayhap we could sell once we leave here. You keep in with the schoolgirls, Jill, and you bring whatever you can get 'old of or cadge."

"Mind you," he added cunningly, "I'm not asking you to pinch 'em. Us Smiths might be gipsies, but pinching's something we've never descended to yet—except, maybe, when times have been had. You'll bring heaps of things back from the big school, won't you, apple and cream of my life?"

Jill gazed rather yearningly towards the hedge through which, five minutes ago, the Cliff House chums, headed by Babs, had disappeared. Cadge—from those girls who had been so kind to her. She flushed at the mere thought.

"I'm not going to cadge," she said.

"Now, Jill, don't you defy me."

"Well I—I'm not, so there."

"Take it easy, take it easy, little apple of my eye," Gipsy George said easily. "I'm not saying, mind you, that you should ask them to give you things. All I'm saying is that you can drop a hint or two. After all," he said smirkingly, "you must have dropped a hint to get the pretty things you're wearing now."

Hot words trembled on Jill's lips, but she choked them back. She walked to the caravan, opened the door and went in.

Gipsy George chuckled.

"Touchy, old Jill," he said to his wife. "The fine clothes putting ideas into her head, eh, Aggie? All the same, she'll do it. We ought to make plenty of money now she's got in with the big school girls. And—" he stopped then. "Hey, look who's here," he muttered.

For across the clearing the hedge had parted. Audrey Dashwood Verner, waiting till Jill had disappeared, now came forward.

"Hallo, missie," Gipsy George said, rising.

"Hallo!" Audrey looked towards the caravan door. "Is—is Jill safe?"

"Safe as 'ouses!" Gipsy George beamed at her. "Bless the child, she's getting herself to bad I 'spect. Anything I can do for you?" And then—"Oh," said Gipsy George, in quite another tone of voice as he saw the rustling something between Audrey's fingers. "You want to buy something, mayhap?"

"No, I want—" Audrey looked at him. "Are there any good to you?" she asked, holding up three one pound notes.

"Missie, would you say that sun and rain is good to a farmer? Collecting them things," Gipsy George asserted solemnly, "has been my 'obby ever since I was a nipper in short pants. What do I do for them?" he asked.

"Nothing much. Just get away from here," Audrey said fervently. "Go now.

Go to-night and—and take Jill with you!"

Gipsy George looked at her. "That all?"

"That's all!"

"Well!" Gipsy George said. "Now that's easy earned money, and if that's all you want, why, bless me, it's a shame to take the cash. Thankee, missie," he added, and coolly flipped the notes out of her fingers. "Consider it done!"

Audrey gulped. Then she nodded and hurried away. A wonderful look of happiness and relief was on her face now.

"And that, thank goodness, is the end of that," she breathed.

No. 8 of—

CLIFF HOUSE PETS

BEAUTY

Mildred Tamplin's Bulldog

I am sure, if dogs have sympathies for their own kind, that most of the sympathies of the canine inmates of the Cliff House Pets' House go to Beauty, the bulldog belonging to Mildred Tamplin, of the Upper Fifth.

For Beauty, despite his name, is a dejected and very unbeautiful dog. He has but little interest in life. Overfed and under-exercised, Beauty knows few of the joys that fall to the lot of other dogs, for Mildred his mistress, self-indulgent and utterly lazy herself, never thinks of taking him out—and rarely indeed, ever thinks of paying him a visit.

Beauty's sole exercise is the somewhat perfunctory trot round the enclosure which Piper the porter gives him every morning. The tit-bits with which Mildred does occasionally feed are so rich and sweet, that his looks and health are certainly not improved by their consumption.

For the most part Beauty sleeps his life away. His only interest in it, indeed, is when he sees the energetic mistresses of other dogs taking their pets off for walks and exercise! And you should see the envy,

the pathetic yearning in Beauty's eyes then!

It is a shame, and, as Clara Trevlyn hotly declares, something ought to be done about it! But lazy Mildred, managing to keep within the bounds of the pet-keeping rules, is safe!

Several times Babs & Co., out of sheer pity for Beauty, have taken him out without his mistress' consent, but Beauty is so slow, so fat, so waddling that it must be confessed there has been little joy in the experience!

And yet Beauty is a good dog. And apart from Mildred's wanton neglect of him there is nobody in his eyes quite like his lazy mistress!

Beauty is getting on now—he is ten years old. He was given to Mildred by a friend of hers who went abroad and has never since returned. But in his younger days Beauty was a dog indeed!—a fierce fighter, a faithful pal and a rare hunter.

It is told of Beauty how he once fought and killed a Siberian wolf which had escaped from a neighbouring circus! It is told of Beauty how, when his former owner, who was a gipsy, lay ill and starving in the camp, he returned each sundown with a rabbit or chicken he had hunted—and how, one day, he returned with a half side of butcher's beef bigger than himself, which he obtained goodness knows where!

It was Beauty, too, who earned Miss Primrose's undying gratitude when a burglar broke into her private house and Beauty, who happened to be free, held him at bay in spite of the fact that he was half killed in the process by vicious blows from a heavy stick.

Poor Beauty! He deserves a better fate! Loyal and affectionate in spite of his forbidding exterior, he is the most even-tempered dog in the Pets' House. But it is to be feared that the Pets' House will not see him much longer, for already the vet has diagnosed a fatty and falling heart in dear Beauty and, apart from that, the poor old chap is going blind!



While in the camp—

"Three quid!" Gipsy George said contentedly, stuffing the notes into his pocket. "Ah, Aggie, ain't it wonderful sometimes the luck that comes to you? Now what maybe should that rich girl want with our Jill out of the way?" he asked thoughtfully.

"But are we going?" Aunt Agnes asked.

"Aggie, my pet, does a man leave a gold mine when he's found it?" asked Gipsy George with a wink.

"But what will she say when she finds we haven't?"

"What," beamed Gipsy George, "can she say, my pet? Who's to prove anything? And I didn't tell her we'd go, did I?" he asked with another wink. "I only told her to consider it done. She won't squawk, don't fear. A girl who comes behind the back of others making bargains that others know noth-

She smiled now as she thought of that.

And then, in the moonlight which filtered through the caravan window, she drew her new Cliff House garments towards her. From the pocket of the tunic she took something. It was a little, circular-shaped locket.

Almost reverently Jill handled it. She turned the locket first so that the moon shone on two initials engraved on the back and then, holding her breath, snapped it open.

Moonlight shone upon the tiny photograph of a beautiful, smiling woman who strangely resembled Audrey Verner in many ways.

Long and earnestly Jill looked at the locket. Funny how she had always woven dreams about the beautiful face which now stared out at her.

As if it had been some sacred talisman she had treasured that photograph, feeling too jealous of it to let anyone

else know that she had got it. Queer, the feeling she had always had that this woman exercised some good influence upon her destiny—and strange with what peace and repose the very act of just looking at the photograph filled her. She smiled tenderly.

Even Jill herself did not know how she had come by the photograph. She seemed to have had it all her life. When those other Gipsy Smiths, her mother and father, had gone abroad and left her with Uncle George and Aunt Agnes she had had it then. They had known of it and had always respected her possession of it.

Somehow, though, she had never been able to bring herself to tell Uncle George and Aunt Agnes about it. It seemed in some fanciful way that she would be doing hurt to the beautiful lady of the locket to share such a secret.

She put it under her pillow. With a happy smile on her face she went to sleep.

Up early next morning was Jill. With the hearty blessings of Uncle George and Aunt Agnes in her ears, she eagerly tripped off to Cliff House. And how her eyes brightened, how her steps hurried when approaching the gate she saw Babs, Mabs, and Bessie Bunter.

"Well, here you are!" Babs laughed. "We've been waiting for you, Jill. I say, you do look smart!" she added admiringly, and Jill blushed. "I say, what are you looking around for?"

"Oh, n-nothing," Jill said. "I—I was just wondering where Miss Verner was, that's all. Is—she all right?" she added wistfully.

"Well, she was last night," Mabs said. "We haven't seen her since. But come along, Jill, and we'll show you where you're going to work. What do you think—you've got a study all to yourself! In the Sixth Form passage, too!"

"Oh, is that the Form Miss Verner belongs to?" Jill asked eagerly.

"That's it!" plump Bessie Bunter beamed. "And only about three doors away from her, too, you know!"

Jill laughed. If she had been happy last night what happiness swept over her now. Her eyes shone. How eagerly she trotted off with her escort.

Gaily she clattered with the chums up the stairs into the Big Hall, with something of yesterday's feeling of awe, turned along the Sixth Form corridor. Babs flung open the door of a room.

"This is where you are going to work, you know, Jill," she said. "This—" and then she stopped as another door farther along the corridor came open. "Why, Audrey!" she cried. "Jill was asking after you."

Jill turned, her eyes ashine. Audrey Dashwood Verner, however, stopped dead.

"You!" she cried.

Jill looked taken aback.

"Y-yes, Miss Verner!"

"What are you doing here?" Audrey cried. "When last night you— She paused, her hands clenched. "Where is your uncle?" she asked.

Jill's big eyes were full open upon her.

"In—in the camp."

"Then he—" Audrey shook her head.

What a fool—what a fool, she was telling herself with helpless fury, for putting her faith in that scoundrel! What an idiot to part with her money, when all the time he intended to trick her. She had thought so easily that she was rid of this girl. She had thought—

"Miss—Miss Verner," Jill quivered.

"Well?" Audrey snapped.

"Have—have I done anything wrong?"

Audrey glared at her. She could not speak. Fury, fear, the realisation that she had been fooled, choked utterance. She turned abruptly on her heel.

"Audrey!" cried Babs angrily.

Audrey disappeared into her study. Bang! went the door. Jill striving desperately to keep the tears back, could not prevent a choked little sob.

"Oh, I—I didn't know!" she said miserably. "I—I oughtn't to have come—"

"Mabs, Bessie, take Jill into the study! Show her what she has to do," Babs said swiftly; and, with a nod, sped after Audrey, and without even troubling to knock, burst into that girl's study. Audrey spun round.

"Get out!" she said thickly.

"When I'm ready!" Babs cried angrily. "What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing!"

"No? Well, I think it's a rotten trick to be nice to Jill like you were yesterday, and then turn round on her like this! Anybody can see that she's awfully fond of you."

Audrey sank into a chair. She stared at the leader of the Fourth.

"I don't believe," Babs went on, "that Jill knew much happiness till yesterday. You helped to make her happy. You were as keen as anybody to give her a chance, weren't you? Now she's got it, why do you behave as if you hated her? And what," Babs added, "is your other little game? Why did you flare up at her yesterday when you heard Miss Primrose had given her a job to do? Why, last night, were you crawling round the gipsy camp?"

Alarm leapt into Audrey's eyes.

"I—I wasn't!"

"Yes, you were! We saw you!" Babs said contemptuously.

"Oh!"

For a moment Audrey looked dismayed, and then suddenly a blush of shame overspread her features. She was a cat! Babs was right! Jill, knowingly, had never done anything to her. At the same time—at the same time—

She passed a hand across her forehead.

"I—I'm sorry," she said helplessly.

"I—I didn't mean to hurt the kid. But—but, well, I'm worried about something. Tell her I—I didn't mean it! Tell her I'm sorry!"

"Don't you think," Babs asked, "that's a job for your own self to do? Supposing I send her along to you?"

"No!" Audrey cried. Then afterwards paused. "Oh, all right!" she said dully. "Send her along if you want to."

Babs gazed at her queerly, nodded, and left. Audrey, left to herself, waited with clenched hands.

There came a timid tap on the door. She opened it. Jill, tremulous and awkward, a half-smile on her face, stared at her with eyes bright with unshed tears.

For a moment Audrey's heart completely melted.

"Silly kid!" she said softly. "Come in! I—I didn't mean to hurt you, Jill."

"N-no, Miss Verner?"

"And—and— Oh, please forgive me!" Audrey said. "I—I'm worried about something, you see, and—well, perhaps you know what it is to be worried. Of course, I like you," she added, looking away. "I—I'm fright-

fully fond of you really, and—and you mustn't take any notice when I'm in a pet. Oh, I say, don't cry!" she added, with alarm; for Jill, in the swift reaction of happiness to grief, simply could not hold back the tears any longer. They came with a rush.

"I—I'm not crying," she sobbed now. "I—I'll be all right in a minute. I— Oh dear, my—my handkerchief!" And blindly she dragged it out of her pocket, and hurriedly dabbed it to her eyes, while Audrey, biting her lip, turned towards the window. "There!" Jill gulped. "I—I'm all right now, Miss Verner."

Audrey turned—she turned with a smile. But even as it appeared the smile faded. Into her eyes jumped a look that alarmed the little gipsy girl. Then tigerishly she pounced upon something which lay on the carpet at Jill's feet.

Jill uttered a cry as Audrey swooped it up. For it was a gold locket, dragged out of her pocket in her convulsive snatch for her handkerchief.

"You little thief!" she blazed. "My locket!"

"Miss Verner—"

"Get out!" Audrey almost shrieked. "Get out! You—you—"

And, shaking, she laid a hand on the gipsy girl's shoulder just as the door opened, and Babs and Mabs came into the room. "You!" she cried. "Take her away!"

"But what on earth's the matter now?" Babs cried.

"She's got my locket!" Jill quavered. "Please—please, give it back!" she begged.

"You little thief!"

"Hold on!" Babs cried angrily. "Mabs, shut the door. Now what is all this?" she asked, and jumped as she saw the locket which Audrey thrust towards her. "Jill—"

"That's mine!" Jill protested, in tears.

"It's mine!" Audrey said savagely. "No sooner had I turned my back, when this little thief had grabbed it! Look at it!" she invited Babs. "Look at it! Tell me whether that's mine or not! Is it?"

She almost shouted the last question. Babs, her mind awl, stared at her. Then she took the locket. A look of consternation appeared in her eyes. For unmistakably it was Audrey's locket. Everybody who knew Audrey knew that locket. There were Audrey's own initials "A. V." engraved on the back.

She looked at the gipsy girl.

"Jill, this is Audrey's—"

"But it isn't!" Jill cried desperately. "It's mine, I tell you!"

"A likely story!" Audrey blazed. "This locket is solid gold. Just the sort of thing a ragged gipsy kid would have about her, isn't it? You took it, you little thief, and I've a jolly good mind to report you to Miss Primrose! Now take her out of my sight!" she raved. "Go on—quickly!"

"But—but—" Jill stuttered.

"Get out!"

And, with Babs' hand on her shoulder, she went. But she went in tears. The door slammed behind them, and Audrey, looking at the locket, snapped it open. She trembled.

If her face had been white when she had first seen the locket, it became ghastly when her eyes fell upon the smiling photograph inside it!

Almost huntedly Audrey Verner continued to stare at the photograph, and

her hand was shaking as she held it in her palm. For a minute—two—she sat there.

Suddenly she rose, crossed to the door, and turned the key. Then she approached the fire.

The fire was already red and glowing, but that did not seem to satisfy Audrey. Removing the draught excluder, she caught up the poker, raking and raking till the heart of the fire glowed like a small furnace.

She took up the locket. For one moment she hesitated, the trinket poised above the fire. Then, with a sharp, almost unnatural laugh, she dropped it.

It fell—right into the heart of heat which she had prepared. Two, three minutes went by before it glowed with the same redness, and then slowly disappeared, turning liquid with the heat.

"And that," Audrey told herself, "does away with that! Thank goodness—thank goodness!"

And with a sigh, half-relieved, half-ashamed, she sank into a chair.



The Clue Among the Ashes!



"I CAN'T — and just won't — believe it!" Barbara Redfern said obstinately.

"Mabs, that kid is no more a thief than you or I!"

"But—how do you account—"

Mabs asked uneasily.

"There's some mistake—"

"You mean you believe Jill really had a locket?"

"I do!"

There was a silence in Study No. 4. Bessie Bunter blinked. Mabs, sitting by the fireside, shook her head doubtfully. Clara Trevlyn was also present.

"Well, all I can say," she said, "is that if Jill did mean to pinch it she must have acted jolly swiftly. But she doesn't look that sort of kiddie."

Babs smiled at her. It was a rather anxious smile, however. All day little Jill had been heartbroken over the loss of her treasured locket, and now she had gone back to the gipsy camp, Babs was thinking all sorts of things.

She couldn't convince herself that Jill had succumbed to a moment of temptation. Jill would never have broken her heart all day at having been merely balked in a would-be theft.

"There's something wrong somewhere," she said—"something jolly wrong. I can't make it out—I just can't make it out. I asked Jill about the locket. Jill wasn't even aware that it was made of gold or was valuable. All she kept on saying was that it contained the photograph of a lovely lady."

"Well, Audrey's locket only had Audrey's own photograph in it," Mabs said.

"That's just what's puzzling me," Babs said. "There's only one solution if Jill isn't a thief. There must be two lockets."

Her three chums looked doubtful.

"But surely," Mabs demurred, "this one had Audrey's own initials on it?"

"Well, if we are to believe the kiddie, so had hers," Babs returned. "In any case, I think it's a point worth clearing up. We haven't seen Audrey since this morning. If Jill, as she says, did drop that locket in her study, Audrey will have found out her mistake by now, and it's only right she should admit it. Anybody coming along to see her?"

"Yes, I will," Clara offered.

Babs nodded. Without further ado, she and Clara left the room. Outside

INTO the dormitory rushed Babs, a pile of clothes on her arm. "Whoops, here we are!" she cried. "I've enough clothes here, Jill, to rig you out for a twelvemonth." The little gipsy's eyes shone. "Oh, Miss Redfern!" she breathed.

Audrey Verner's study they halted and knocked. There was no reply.

"Come on. Let's go in and wait," Babs said.

They went in. The study was empty. The window, however, was wide open, and the breeze blowing through it had disturbed some papers on Audrey's desk, and had spilled them over the floor. As they entered, a stronger draught, created by the opening of the door, lifted a sheaf of other papers, sending them whirling. One fluttered into Babs' face.

"Phoo!" Babs cried, momentarily blinded; and, putting up a swift hand as she staggered back, accidentally swept a vase of flowers from the top of Audrey's bookcase.

Too late, she plunged at it to save the fall. In doing so her foot caught in the carpet, and she went crashing heavily against the table. There came a yell from Clara as the table rocked.

"Babs, look out!"

Too late! For even as Clara started forward and Babs, crimson with confusion and dismay, twisted round, the damage was done. Towards the fireplace toppled the table, cascading its contents—a vase of flowers, an inkstand containing red, green, and black inks, and several books—on to the floor.

"Oh, mum-my hat!" stuttered Babs.

"Great collywobbles, look at that ink!" gasped Clara. "Babs, get a duster or something! It's just soaking into the carpet! We—"

And then she jumped as the door came open, as Audrey Verner entered, accompanied by Miss Primrose. Audrey took one look at the wreck of her study, and shrieked:

"You little wretches!"

"Oh crumbs! P-please, Audrey—"

"Pip-please, Miss Primrose—" Clara gabbled wildly.

"Why, bless my soul, what is this?" Miss Primrose cried. "Barbara—"

"We—we had an accident, Miss Primrose!"

"You had a what?" Audrey glared.

"Sure you didn't come here to rag my study?" she demanded.

"Oh, no!"

"Then perhaps," Audrey said, and her eyes glimmered, "you will be good enough to explain what you were doing in this study without permission?"

"Well, we—we came to see you!" Babs blurted. "You weren't in—"

"Then in that case," Miss Primrose interposed, "surely you should have gone away again?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose; but the matter was urgent," Babs said.

"What was the matter?" demanded Audrey.

"Well, it was about Jill," Babs said uncomfortably.

"Jill?" Miss Primrose looked interested at once. "What about Jill?"

Babs glanced helplessly at Audrey. Audrey's lips closed.

"It was about a—a locket," she said. "We—we thought that Audrey might have found that she had made a mistake. Audrey, did—"

"Please wait a moment, Barbara!" Miss Primrose held up a hand. "What is this about a locket and a mistake, Audrey? How does it concern the gipsy girl? I haven't heard anything about this."

"Well, no, Miss Primrose." Audrey bit her lip. "I—I didn't think it worth while troubling you with the matter," she said. "Jill was guilty of just a momentary temptation; but, after all, being a gipsy, I suppose you can't blame her for that. She—she tried to run away with my gold locket this morning!"

The headmistress jumped.

"But, Audrey, that should have been reported to me!"

"I'm sorry. But—well, I—I don't blame her. She—she might only have just picked it up while my back was turned," Audrey said, but Babs noticed she did not look Miss Primrose in the eyes as she said it. "The foolish little thing pretended that it was hers, that's

all. I am afraid that rather annoyed me."

"Oh!" said Miss Primrose, and looked so acutely concerned all at once that Babs could guess the thoughts running through her mind. "I hope—I trust," she said anxiously, "that—that I have not made a mistake in the girl. She looks so trustworthy—so honest. Barbara, what sort of mistake did you think Audrey had made?"

Babs stumbingly explained. But even she was forced to admit to herself that it seemed feeble. That it impressed Miss Primrose in the same way was obvious.

"Well, please let me know if there is any repetition of such an incident," she said. "Meantime, Barbara, as you have created such havoc in this study, I think you and Clara had better do your best to clear it up. Audrey, if you will get your matriculation papers, we will go through the points you asked about in my study."

Audrey nodded. She secured the papers required from her desk; without another glance at Babs and Clara went out. The two chums looked at each other and grimaced.

"So much," Clara sighed, "for our pains. Well, what about the two lockets now, Babs?"

"All the same, I'm sure Jill didn't try to steal Audrey's," Babs said doggedly.

Clara extended a hand.

"Put it there, old thing!" she said. "I'm with you! If that kid's a thief, so am I! Though I'm blessed if I know," she added worriedly, "how to explain it! And it isn't going to help matters with old Primmy getting suspicious! Anyway, let's clear this mess up!"

Babs nodded. Together they set about the task. No easy job! Ink shone in vivid patches all over the carpet near the fireplace. A trickle of it had shot right across the tiles of the hearth, disappearing under the grate.

Vigorously they tackled it, however. With turpentine, ammonia, and some old rubbers Clara scrubbed at the stains. Babs, fetching hot water, washed the tiles of the hearth, and, in order to make a complete job of it, removed the ashes. It was as she was emptying the latter that she stopped.

"Hallo!" she muttered. "Clara!"

"Yes?"

"What's this? It looks as if Audrey's been melting something!"

Clara looked at the ashes Babs was indicating. There, among them, was a shapeless lump of metal. Tiny globules of the same metal were among the cinder-dust.

"Crumbs! It looks like—like gold!" she breathed, and stared at Babs. "But, of course, it can't be, can it? I mean to say—Babs, what are you doing?"

For Babs suddenly was doing the queerest thing in the world. Carefully unfolding her handkerchief, she was tying up the lump of metal within it!

A Cruel Resolve!



"I'M going to get it back! I must get it back!"

Almost fiercely Gipsy Jill repeated those words to herself as she tramped through the woods which led to Cliff House School.

It was the next morning, a bright and summery morning with the promise of a really hot day to follow. Birds

twittered gaily in the branches of the trees, and life seemed full of happiness. But there was little happiness in the heart of the gipsy girl.

The last fourteen or fifteen hours, indeed, had been among the blackest little Gipsy Jill had ever known.

Yesterday she had been so proud, so eager, so rapturously delighted to find herself once again in the company of those friends she had so grown to love. She had looked forward with such intense eagerness to meeting Audrey, and when she had met Audrey that girl had been so horrid to her! And there had been that dreadful business of the locket, followed by the confiscation of the locket itself.

When she had arrived back in the camp last night Gipsy George had been surly and hostile, and had ended by giving her a good smacking, and sending her supperless to bed.

Only Babs & Co., it seemed, still remained to her of the happiness she had known. She was bewildered and dismayed concerning Audrey's conduct, but what hurt her more than anything else was that her cherished locket should have gone!

She trudged on. Babs, Clara, Mabs, and Bessie, as before, were waiting to welcome her at the gate. They saw at once the tired misery in her little face. Very gently Babs took the wai's arm. She said:

"Had some breakfast, Jill?"

"N-no, B-Babs," Jill said.

"Oh crumbs! I say," Bessie said, shocked, "you can't go on like that, you know. Why didn't you have some breakfast?"

"Please, Miss Bunter, be-cause I couldn't eat any," Jill replied, her lips beginning to quiver.

"Then," Babs announced, "you're jolly well going to eat something now! This way to the tuckshop! No, Jill, no objections, old thing!" And while Jill feebly protested she tugged her into the tuckshop.

"But, really—" Jill cried, and stopped, her face suddenly changing colour. "Miss Verner!"

For Audrey it was. She had just turned away from the counter, a paper bag in her hand. She paused, looking for a moment as uncomfortable as Jill herself, and almost guilty.

"Miss Verner," Jill quivered again. "Oh dear! Please may I have my locket back?"

"Don't be silly!" Audrey snapped, and with a crimson colour marched off.

Jill gazed after her. Something like a sob came to her throat. Clara glared. She had half a mind to run after the ungracious prefect, never guessing the frightful turmoil going on in Audrey's mind as she marched rapidly back into the school. What a pig she was! What a cat! she was telling herself.

And yet—She stiffened. No, she mustn't be weak. She liked Jill. She really did feel, in spite of her treachery towards her, some melting influence in her heart as soon as those wondering eyes of the youngster fixed themselves upon her.

But she couldn't afford to feel soft and sympathetic towards Jill Smith now. Later, perhaps, when she was more assured, she might do something for her. But not now. Certainly not now. Gipsy Jill, quite unknowingly, constituted to Audrey Verner the greatest menace that girl had ever known.

"JEMIMA. WHAT is it?" Barbara Redfern asked. "Jemima Carstairs, a monocle gleam-

ing in her eye, turned from the table in the Cliff House laboratory.

A very queer girl was Jemima, but a very bright and clever one, for all that. Also, Jemima was the geologist of the Fourth Form, and in that capacity possessed a knowledge that would have shamed many a senior girl at present studying for her degree in the subjects of chemistry and mineralogy.

And Jemima, at this moment, was weighing the rather small and shapeless yellow lump which Barbara Redfern had rescued from the ashes of Audrey Verner's fire yesterday.

"It is," she observed, "a native element well known to the merry old universe at large. There is a certain alloy of silver and copper amongst it, but the main content of this metal is undoubtedly old Spartan gold. And gold," Jemima said wisely, "which has passed through fire."

Babs' eyes gleamed.

"You mean, it might have been some trinket which had been accidentally turned into a fire and melted?"

"Absolutely!" Jemima murmured. "How successfully thou dost sum up my inmost thought, my Barbara! Anything else I can do for you, old Spartan?"

"No, thanks!" Babs said. "And thanks, old Jimmy—frightfully!"

Jemima beamed.

It was midday break then. Dinner had come and gone, and little Jill, the gipsy, had returned to her labours. Mabs and Clara were in Study No. 4, Bessie having hurried off to the tuckshop to buy some toffee. Both girls started round eagerly as Babs rushed in.

"Babs, what is it?"

"Gold!" Babs cried.

"No!"

"It is!" Babs gulped. "Jimmy tested it with acid! Well, then, what did I say? Audrey didn't sling gold on the fire by accident! Supposing, as we think, that she did take Jill's locket, wouldn't she want to get rid of it as soon as she could? And how," Babs asked, "could she have got rid of it, except by burning it?"

"She might have hidden it," Clara suggested.

"She might. But don't you think she would have been scared of someone finding it?" Babs retorted. "No! This is the locket, all right, and Audrey meant to destroy it. The question is, why?"

"Well, because there were two of them?" Mabs asked hesitantly.

"What else?" came Babs' immediate retort. "And then, you know, it's funny," she added, staring at them. "If Audrey destroyed that locket it was because she was afraid of the duplicate. And why was she afraid of it? Another question," Babs added, never noticing, in her excitement, a sudden creak from the door, "is how did Jill come by it in the first place? How comes it that she and Audrey both possess identical lockets?"

They stared at each other breathlessly.

"Well, perhaps this is the answer," said Clara. "Where did Audrey get her locket? Seems pretty clear to me that they would both have come from the same source, in the first place. Perhaps the same person who gave Audrey her locket gave the duplicate to Jill!"

"But it was Audrey's uncle who gave her the locket," Mabs said. "And how on earth could Audrey's uncle have ever met Jill? Unless—or, rats! There goes lesson bell," she added, as the bell

clanged out. "Leave it till this afternoon, Babs. But it does look as if we're on to something, doesn't it?"

It did. Though exactly what, none of them could tell at that moment. It meant, perhaps, more than they imagined, if the expression on Audrey Verner's face was anything to judge by. For, unknown to them, Audrey, about to enter Study No. 4, had heard every word of that conversation!

And Audrey was trembling in fright as she hurried now along the corridor. So Babs knew! Babs had deduced, though she could not prove it, that she had destroyed Jill's locket! Babs, with her chums, was busy putting two and two together!

If the truth came out now! If they found out what she dreaded then finding out! They shouldn't—they mustn't! The only one certain way of making sure they did not find out was by getting Jill thrown out of the school here and now, with no possibility of ever returning.

Audrey flung herself into her study, thinking furiously. Suddenly an idea came—an idea which made her catch her breath.

"No. No, I can't!" she muttered. "That—that would be too bad!"

"But if you don't do it?" a mocking voice within her seemed to taunt.

One side of her shrank from the idea which had come to her, the other urged her on.

She set her teeth. Lesson bell rang, but as that had no meaning for a girl of the Sixth—they studied in their own time—she did not move. Yes, no—yes, no! This way and that the battle within her swayed.

And suddenly she rose. Her mind was made up. It was herself, or Jill—Jill must be the sacrifice.

Lessons were in progress by that time, and through the window she saw Dulcia Fairbrother, captain of the school, talking to Lady Patricia Northanson on Senior Side. A gleam came into her eyes. Quickly she hurried along to Dulcia's study and entered.

Furtively Audrey's gaze roamed about her. Then a hiss of satisfaction came to her lips as she saw that for which she was in search. The article was a small silver figure, occupying the pride of place on Dulcia's mantelpiece. It was the award Dulcia had earned last year for the most notable performance on the cricket field, and was, very naturally, one of Dulcia's greatest treasures.

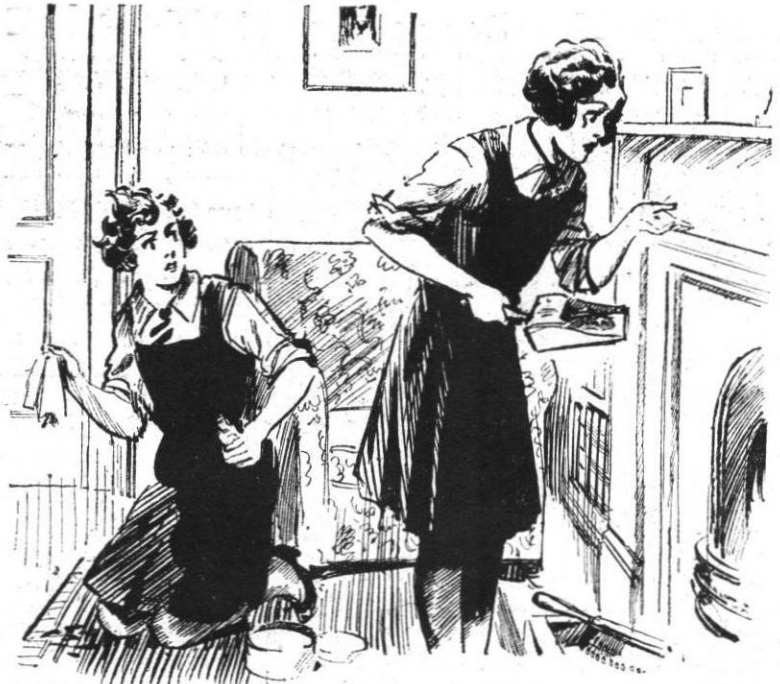
Audrey stepped towards it. Feeling like a thief herself, she snatched it up and then rushed off to Attic No. 1.

She didn't allow herself to think as she sought out clothes from the basket there. They were all cast-offs, most of them still in excellent condition, and were saved by Miss Primrose for an orphanage in London in which she was interested.

Audrey selected a thick coat, and into the pocket of that coat she rammed Dulcia's silver figure. She took a frock, another gym suit, two or three suits of underwear, two pairs of pyjamas, and some shoes and stockings.

"That'll do!" she muttered. She stole out of the attic. The whole school was silent then. Along to the room in which little Jill was working she made her way, and, knocking, entered. Jill, busy on Miss Primrose's tapestry curtain, looked up, and her face went red and white by turns.

"Oh!" she said. Audrey stole herself. "Jill, I—I've brought you something. And—and—oh, Jill, I do want to say how sorry I am



"HALLO!" muttered Babs, and stared at the little metal lump. "It looks as if Audrey's been melting something." Babs had made a curious discovery, a discovery which was destined to be of vital importance to little Gipsy Jill.

for the beastly way I've treated you. You—you do forgive me, my dear?"

Jill's eyes were big. "You mean you still like me?" she breathed.

"Yes, Jill, I—I've always liked you, and—and I always shall," Audrey gulped, reflecting that there was some truth in that. "I—I'm sorry about the locket. I really did think it was mine, you know!"

"Oh, Miss Verner, then—then can I have it back now?"

"Yes," Audrey said, and winced a little. "That—that is, when I've found it. I—I seem to have mislaid it somewhere. But don't worry; I'll have ever such a good search, and when you come to-morrow I'll have it ready for you! We're still friends?" she asked anxiously.

"Oh, Miss Verner, I never wanted to be anything else but friends!" Jill said eagerly. "I—I've been so miserable thinking you hated me," she added shyly.

Again for a moment Audrey's heart smote her, but again fiercely she caught herself up.

"But now," she said, "you're going to be ever and ever so happy, aren't you, Jill? Let's forget all that horrid business, shall we? Now, look what I've brought you. No, Jill, you simply must take them. And wait a minute," she added. "I've got an old case in my study which you can have for keeps. You can take these things away in that."

She dodged out. In a few minutes she returned. While she opened the case and folded the things Jill happily packed them inside. The lid was snapped to. Audrey locked it and handed the gipsy girl the keys.

"There!" she said. "Now you've a case of your very own, haven't you? And, oh goodness, I must fly!" she added, as the bell sounded. "Bye-bye, Jill!"

"G-good-bye, Miss Verner!" Jill stammered.

And she sewed again. Once more she

felt happy. After lessons, Babs & Co. were astonished at the change in her.

And glad. She went off after tea, proudly taking her case with her. Babs and Clara and Leila and Bessie accompanied her to the gates, then strolled back to school. As they did so Dulcia Fairbrother, looking very worried, came out of Big Hall.

She stopped the four.

"Babs, has the gipsy girl gone?" "Just a few minutes ago, I guess," Leila said. "But say, what's jumping? You look excited, Dulcia!"

"I am," said Dulcia. "The silver cricket award has gone from my study! Audrey Verner says she saw the gipsy kid coming out of my study this afternoon, and, if she's gone, I'm afraid that's gone with her. She—!" And she paused then, as Miss Primrose, with Audrey by her side, issued from the school. She spoke sharply.

"Dulcia, have you found her?" "No, Miss Primrose; she's—she's gone!" Dulcia said.

"But, Miss Primrose," Babs cried, "you don't think Jill would have—"

"I must make sure," Miss Primrose said worriedly. "Barbara, you are a friend of the girl. You, Audrey, saw her emerging from Dulcia's room. I think," Miss Primrose added, "we had all better go along to the camp—at once. If Jill has taken that figure—"

"But, Miss Primrose—" Mabs cried. "Please, Mabel! Barbara, get yourself ready."

Babs darted away, looking anxious and worried.

In the cloak-room she put on her hat and coat. With Audrey, Dulcia, and Miss Primrose she set off for the gipsy camp in the clearing of Friardale Wood.

They arrived there to find Jill in the very act of opening the case and Gipsy George, a look of joy on his face, greedily snatching out the garments as they were displayed. Aunt Agnes was

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

Your friend PATRICIA has quite a lot to say about bathing suits in her letter to you this week. She also tells you of a very, very strange school, and of a pretty trimming for a frock—all in that delightful way of hers which has endeared her to you all.



IT'S swimming time again! That's what your Patricia has just decided to herself.

From which, you will guess that I'm not much of an expert, like those people who break the ice on the Serpentine in Hyde Park on Christmas morning, or have their photos in the paper about February because they've been first in the sea this year.

No, much as I do love swimming, I confess I like an outdoor pool (if I can't have the sea), and I like the water to be pleasantly warm. In addition, I also like my first bathe to be followed by a luxurious sun-bath, 'cause this is not only cosy and warming and delicious, but also good for my good looks—vain me!

"Heath, young lad," said I, the other morning, to my small brother with the long name. (It's Heatherington in full.) "Heath, you can help me bring the summer trunk down from the loft, and we'll dig out our bathing costumes."

As you have probably guessed, the "summer trunk" is merely a big trunk in which all the summer clothes are put away every autumn, to await the next summer. If we didn't do this, there would never be enough room in chests of drawers and wardrobes to keep all the family clothes. Then, you see, when summer comes, we take out all the summer clothes, and place winter clothes in the trunk instead—so it then becomes the winter trunk. I know that sounds a bit complicated, but it's quite simple, really.

Well—after all this explanation—we went and fished down the summer trunk, with Olive, that's our maid, to help us.

"Coo me, isn't it heavy!" gasped Heath, who wasn't doing anything, but just placing a hand lightly on the trunk "to guide it," as he expressed it.

At last it was in our sitting-room and Heath and I spent a lovely half-hour,

● Exploring the Trunk

Out came father's summer pyjamas—he likes nice hairy ones in the winter—big brother's white flannels, mother's cotton frocks—oh, and a real collection of vague oddments.

Then, right at the bottom of the trunk, were the bathing suits. These had all been washed in soapy water at the end of last summer, dried, ironed and put away, just like any other precious garment.

Surprisingly enough, my swim-suit didn't strike me as a bit jaded-looking, as last year's things often do. In fact, I was quite thrilled at its modern appearance.

The red, green, and white stripes were still bright. The two straps—one red and one green—that tie around the neck,

were still intact. Even the white underneath part of the bathing suit—for this one has just a tiny overskirt, you see—was snowy, in spite of all the sea water of the Mediterranean. There was just one stain on it—only one made by the very dark sun-tan oil I had applied while on holiday.

Even my white rubber bathing cap hadn't perished. That was probably because mother had placed a roll of tissue paper inside it.

But young Heath's bathing suit was pitiful.

"Is this mine, Pat?" he said plaintively, holding it up, with a comical expression on his face.

"It surely is," I said. "Or did you think it was daddy's?" I teased.

"Oh, no," replied Heath, quite seriously. "I didn't think it was daddy's 'cause it would be too small for him."

It would also be much too small for Heath!

"I think we'd better give it to Minkie," Heath said thoughtfully.

I smiled.

"I think so, too," I said. "Unless you can find a little mouse it would fit!"

But the result is that Minkie, the family kitten, who's certainly not as small as he was, is to have Heath's bathing suit. I cut off the straps part and stitched it around with wool. It now makes a very cosy little blanket in Minkie's basket. (The old one had been chewed to shreds, I must inform you.)

I still haven't had my first bathe yet, by the way—and shan't until Heath has a new bathing suit, which will be very soon, I hope.

● A Bit Bigger

While we're on this fascinating subject—and you do love swimming, don't you?—I wonder how much you have grown since last summer.

Whether it's a lot or whether it's a little, I expect you'll have a bit of a shock when you come to try on your favourite bathing suit.

So perhaps you—like Heath—will be having a new one.

But since it is such a luxury to have two, I think it well worth "letting out" your old one if it is too tight.

A piece of braid, about two inches in width will do this beautifully.

You can inset it down each side of your bathing suit, starting under the arm and finishing at the side of your leg.



Not only will this give you lots of extra room, but it will also look amazingly smart, especially if the braid is bright.

● For Grown-Ups Only

What a lot about bathing and bathing wear in one week. Now we'll have something school-y for a change.

I know you all feel that even when you leave school, whether at the age of fourteen or at eighteen, there will still be a lot to learn.

You only have to listen to the grown-ups for a little while to realise this.

"I wish I could have MY schooldays over again," they say, now don't they? Until you really begin to feel that there must be something in this wish to learn, after all.

Well, in Oklahoma City in America, this wish has been granted to those people who wish to go back to school.

But—this school is for men and women who are past 70!

For a moment you might think they had no pupils among the grannies and grandads of Oklahoma. But haven't they?

There are 900 pupils!

The oldest "boy" is 111 and the oldest "girl" is 102.

So you tell your granny or grandpa this next time they pop round to see you—and just see what they say!

● A Pretty Notion

Ribbon makes such a dainty trimming on a dress, doesn't it?

If you're having a making you one—or if you're having a shot at making one yourself—and you don't know quite how to "finish it off," what about the idea in the picture here?

Four yards of ribbon to match the frock will make this pretty trimming. You can sew it all round the neck, round both sleeves, and make a belt as well of it.

Then, as a finishing touch, make three little bows, and sew these all in a row on one side of the bodice.

That gives even a plain frock a real garden-party look, now doesn't it?

Oh, and you know how I keep telling you that boleros (little jackets, and pronounced bol-ayros) are smart for school-girls?

Well, in Deanna Durbin's newest film "Mad About Music," she wears no fewer than three. (No, not all at once, of course!) So that's settled it. They ARE smart!

Your friend,
PATRICIA.



GAMES FOR OUTDOOR DAYS

Some cheery games that all can join in when your "gang" goes out to play.



A KNOCK comes at your door. It's your chum.

"Are you coming out to play?" she says; and after getting mother's permission, away you go.

You start off with lots of ideas for "what to play." There's skipping, and "tops" and "He" and "Hot Rice"—and then suddenly you can't think what on earth to do next.

Now isn't that so?

So next time you go out to play, you shall be the one with the suggestion for the next game, for here are some good group games that are always a success out of doors for you to choose from.

OPPOSITES

"Opposites" is a good game where four or more of you are playing.

But—you must select a really good "captain" for this game.

The captain must arrange her players, and then stand in the middle of them.

Then she gives orders. These orders must be selected with care, for the players have to do just the opposite to what she says.

If the leader says "raise your right leg," the players must raise their left. If the leader says "take two steps forward," all players must take two steps backwards, and so on. You will, I'm

sure, be able to think of plenty of amusing "orders."

As soon as one player does what she is told, instead of the opposite, she is "out," and the last player left in is the one to be captain next.

CAT AND MOUSE

This is fun when there are ten or more players.

You all stand in a circle and link hands, making an arch between each player. One girl is selected to be the "cat."

She must run round and round the circle until she touches one girl on the back. This girl then becomes the "mouse."

"Mouse" must immediately dart away around the circle, in any direction she pleases—and the "cat" must follow.

Mouse should dart in and out, under the arches, in all directions—but still "cat" must follow. If "cat" makes a mistake in following "mouse's" tracks, then "cat" takes her place in the circle again and "mouse" becomes "cat."

On the other hand, should "cat" catch "mouse," then "mouse" goes back to the circle, and "cat" has another chase for being so quick.

HIT THE DARTER

Four players or more can play this game, and it's lots of fun. One girl is made the "darter" and the other are "statues." The "darter" must arrange the "statues" in a fairly big square, and the rule is that they must not move from that spot, except perhaps to swivel round on their feet.

The darter now gives one of the "statues" a ball—a soft one, please. Then the "darter" starts to run in and out and around the "statues." The object of the "statues" is to hit the player who is running. They may pass the ball to one another, and aim it at the "darter." She is the one who must pick it up if it should be out of reach of the "statues"—for the statues must not move.

The girl who succeeds in hitting the

runner may take her place, and the "darter" then becomes a "statue."

RACES

There are any number of racing games that you can play with a "gang" providing you have plenty of space—and they can be excellent practice, too, for your school sports.

"Slow Bicycle Race" is fun for you who have bikes. The object of this is for the players to ride as slowly as ever they can to the winning post. The last one to reach the post is the winner.

But remember, no feet must touch the ground in this race, or that player is disqualified.

Three of you can play three-legged race and have lots of laughs—and perhaps some tumbles—out of it.

Two of the players must link arms behind their backs, and you must tie the left ankle of one to the right ankle of the other. You can tie them at the knees as well if you like. Then at the word "go," they start to run together.

Just a little practice and it's surprising how agile good runners can become, racing along like this.

There are all sorts of "obstacle races," of course, but Potato Race is one of the best.

For this you should arrange as many potatoes in a row as there are players. Each potato should have an elastic band or a piece of string tied around it. Give each player a stick, and she must pick up the potato by the band or string, and race with it to the winning post.

Slow but sure is often the winner in this hilarious game.



WHEN YOU WASH A JUMPER—

There is a correct way to do it, you know—a very successful way, too.

I'M quite sure that among your collection of woollies—whether bought or made for you by mother—there is at least one that is extra precious. One that you almost fear to wash just in case the colours should "run," or—dread thought!—that it should shrink.

It is for this very valuable jumper, then, that I want you to make use of these extra-careful instructions for washing.

First, lay the jumper out on a sheet of newspaper without pulling or stretching it as you do so. Then pencil the outline of the jumper on to the paper.

If you fear for the colours "running," I want you next to dip the jumper into a basin of warm water—warm only, mind—containing a handful of ordinary salt.

Wring out the jumper and then prepare your washing water. This should be only just warm. If you have it at all hot, I warn you, shrinkage is likely.

Into this water hurl a handful of your favourite soap flakes. Next swish these around until they are quite, quite melted.

Then—plunge in your jumper. Don't

rub, don't pull, and don't treat it rough. Just squeeze and squeeze it, keeping it well under the water. And be as quick as you can over the job, too. On no account leave the jumper "to soak."

Now give it two rinsings in clear water—water the same temperature as before.

Squeeze it as dry as you can and then arrange it on the newspaper containing the outline. Pull the jumper gently to fit the pattern again exactly.

Now I know how you like little maxims—at least, I do, so I think you must, too.

Well, here is one for the perfect drying of a jumper. "Neither too quickly, nor too slowly," you must say to yourself as you look around for a suitable place to lay your woolly burden.

If the day is bright and sunny, then do by all means, lay the paper containing the jumper out of doors, flat on a table, or even on the lawn.

Should it be windy, place a clean pebble at each corner of it, to prevent its disappearance into the next-door garden! But please don't lay the jumper in the full glare of the sun—unless it is a white one.

For the sun, you know, is Nature's own bleacher. (A good tip, that, for you who wish your hair were a little fairer!) But perhaps it will not be convenient to dry your carefully washed jumper out of doors, so it must stay in.

Well, the kitchen pulley is a good place. But you must still keep it flat there. Place paper and jumper, just as they are, over all five rails of the pulley.

It is a good plan to turn the jumper over after an hour or so, to give the other side a chance.

When it is dry you can iron it very carefully on the wrong side, using a warm iron.

It will look quite as good as new, I promise you.

(Continued from page 11)

there, too. They all started up as the Cliff House party stepped on to the scene.

"Oh, Miss Verner!" cried Jill radiantly.

"Jill," Miss Primrose snapped, "who gave you those clothes?"

"I—I gave her the clothes, Miss Primrose," Audrey said at once. "And the case. She hasn't stolen those!"

Jill flashed her a grateful, wondering look. Audrey smiled at her.

"Then, please," Miss Primrose said angrily, "let me see them! No, sir, don't touch them," she warned, as Gipsy George made as if to grab hold of them.

"I have no objection to Jill having the clothes, but something else has been missed at Cliff House School, and there is a suggestion that Jill might have taken that thing and hidden it away in these clothes. Please put them down and wait until I have examined them."

"But—but—" Jill cried.

Miss Primrose picked up a garment. She handed it to Dulcia. Dulcia searched. At the same time the headmistress caught up the coat.

And then:

"Jill!" she cried, her voice quivering with anger. "Jill!" she almost thundered, and, pulling her hand out of the pocket of that coat, dragged to light—Dulcia Fairbrother's silver figure.

An Unsuspected Blow!



"BUT I didn't take it. I didn't!" Jill cried wildly. "I've never seen it before!"

"Jill, please!" Miss Primrose frowned. "How dare you tell such lies, child, when the thing is found in your possession? It is enough, I am sorry that in the first place I allowed you to come to the school. Mr. Smith," she added.

"Yes, madam?" Gipsy George said sullenly.

"I do not know if you had anything to do with this—"

"I didn't!"

"In any case," Miss Primrose said. "I think it would be better for all concerned if you packed up and went. Though you may not be aware of the fact, this wood is the school's property, and you should have sought my permission to use it in the first place. I shall expect you to remove your caravans by to-morrow morning."

"But look here—" snapped Gipsy George.

"That is enough! Please go! If you do not," Miss Primrose threatened. "I shall put this matter in the hands of the police! Girls, come along!"

"But Jill!" cried Babs.

"Jill can take care of herself. Come—at once!"

Babs looked at Jill, sitting down with her face in her hands, sobbing now as if her heart would break. She hesitated as Miss Primrose turned away. Audrey, biting her lip, the queerest sort of expression on her face, halted, too. While Miss Primrose, with stiff dignity, rustled off through the wood, with Dulcia at her side, Babs, torn by compassion for the little one, reached her side. She put a hand on her shoulder.

"Jill—Jill!" she murmured, unaware that Audrey was standing there, too. "Oh, my goodness, don't cry, kid. Here," she added, and then became aware of Audrey. "Audrey, help—help her into the caravan," she whispered, almost crying herself. "We can't leave the kid like this."

Jill seemed entirely helpless. Unresisting, she allowed herself to be raised. Watched by the angry Gipsy George and Aunt Agnes, she was led across to the caravan; sobbing, she was helped into it; sobbing still, she sank down on the rough bed.

"I—I—I didn't do it!" she wailed.

"No, of course you didn't!" Babs soothed anxiously. "Oh, my hat! Audrey, get her a drink," she said.

"Look, there's some water there"—and she pointed to a jug on the window ledge standing by a cheap tin box on which rested a glass.

With a nod, feeling meaner, more utterly hateful than she had ever felt in her life before, Audrey crossed to it. But in taking the jug down, she caught the tin box with the sleeve of her coat. It fell to the floor, smashing open, and out of it fell a shower of small treasures.

A little doll. A cheap brass ring. A small golf ball which had seen very many better days, and a faded-looking document. Audrey, with the glass in one hand and the jug in the other, gave a gasp.

"Oh, sorry!" she said. "Wait a min—"

And then suddenly she froze. For her eyes were staring at that document. That—that—that—oh, great goodness! And it seemed that an icy hand clutched at Audrey's heart. That—that paper! Oh, fool, fool, to think she had never even given such a paper a thought! What use all her scheming, when this—this was still in existence!

"All right!" It was Babs' voice that fell upon her ears—Babs who was bending down, hurriedly scraping the things back into the box. "Give her the drink, Audrey, I'll look after this. There—" And Babs, having put the things back into the box, placed it again on the sill. "Now," she said, "feeling better, Jill?"

"Y-yes," stammered Jill. "And—oh, Miss Redfern, don't say I've got to go!"

"You haven't," Babs said firmly.

"Don't worry, kid. We'll find a way out of it, somehow. I say, Audrey, what's the matter with you?" she added. "What are you staring at the window for?"

"The tin box," Audrey muttered unguardedly. "I mean, I was looking at—at something, you know," she added confusedly.

"You're as white as a sheet!"

"Am I? I—I think I need a breath of air," Audrey mumbled. "Jill, I—I'm so sorry. I—I—Babs, will you excuse me?" she added incoherently.

"Jill, my dear, good-bye. And—don't worry," she added, as she stumbled down the steps.

But Jill's answer was a sob.

When She Felt Safe At Last!



"W E'VE got to do something,"

Babs said fiercely, "and we've got to do it jolly soon. There's something

dashed queer about all this, and if Audrey hasn't something to do with it, well, I—I'm a looney! I hadn't thought about it until this moment, but it was Audrey, wasn't it, who put Primmy on Jill's track? It was Audrey who gave her those clothes?"

Mabs, Clara, and Leila Carroll, in Study No. 4, looked uneasy.

"Well, yes," Leila said.

"And we know now that Audrey pinched Jill's locket and destroyed it," Babs said. "Put two and two together, and what do you make of them? It

just looks," she added, answering her own question, "as if Audrey had some reason for wanting the kid out of the school, and worked this scheme in order to get her out! And there's another funny thing that happened in Jill's caravan, but I, like a fool, didn't see anything strange in it until I came to think about it afterwards. Jill had a tin box there, full of oddments, and a letter that seemed like some sort of legal document. Audrey knocked it down, and from that minute behaved just as if somebody had stunned her. I believe," Babs said, "that she saw something in that box that gave her a shock."

"But what?" asked Mabs.

"The letter perhaps—I don't know. Apart from all that," Babs added, her eyes beginning to gleam, "I seem to remember now that Audrey was frightfully disturbed about a birthmark Jill's got on her arm. There's something in all this—something big. And the only way I can see of getting at the truth," Babs finished, "is to pump Jill for all we're worth!"

"I second that!" Clara said. "Too late now, though, to go to the camp. We'll have to go to-night!"

"Breaking bounds?" asked Mabs.

"Sure, why not?" questioned Leila. "All in a good cause, I guess!"

And so that was decided upon: though, to be sure, nobody felt the expedition was entirely full of hope. And, strangely enough, in her study Audrey Dashwood Verner was also planning a similar trip, but with motives far different from the kindly intentions of Babs & Co.

She was still showing traces of her fright. That paper! That paper in Jill's caravan!

Somehow, Audrey had to get hold of that! She must get hold of it! While that paper remained in existence, she would never know a moment's rest!

She went to bed presently, but not to sleep. Shortly after ten she rose, dressed herself. In the hot, still air of the night she hurried towards the camp. Outside Jill's caravan the fire still burned, but of Gipsy George, Aunt Agnes, or Jill herself, there was no sign.

To the east of the wood, however, there was a strange red glare. A heavy smell of smoke hung in the air.

In the tumult of her own emotions, Audrey did not notice these facts. Quickly, furtively, her eyes went round the clearing. Stealthily she crept towards the door of Jill's caravan. For a moment she paused outside, listening. From the interior of the caravan came the sound of a girl's heavy breathing.

Jill was asleep!

Softly Audrey turned the door knob and entered. Jill stirred. In the darkness the Cliff House senior stood, holding her breath.

Then she saw the tin box on the window-sill. With nerves strung and tense, she tiptoed towards it. With fingers that trembled, she took off the lid, and she could almost have screamed relief, when her fingers touched the crackling paper. She had it! It was hers!

She turned and the box slipped from her fingers. From Jill came a surprised cry as the sound of the impact echoed through the caravan:

"Who's there?"

Like a flash Audrey was at the door. With a presence of mind which afterwards caused her to marvel, she slipped the key from inside and inserted it in the lock outside.

"Audrey!" Jill cried.

Audrey slammed the door, turned the

key, and then ran towards the camp-fire. That paper! She had it! Savagely she crunched it into a ball and hurled it into the blaze.

Jill's face was at the caravan window now. She was calling: "Audrey! Audrey! What are you doing? Let me out!"

Blindly Audrey turned. What had she done? What? Suddenly she was taken by a shaking fit of fear and trembling, of horror and repugnance at herself. She must get away—get away! She could not bear to face Jill now; could not bear ever to look that girl in the face again. As if pursued, she took to her heels.

She ran—how she ran! She ran blindly, fearfully, only dimly aware of that brightening redness in the scene,

A Traitor No Longer!



"O H, golly, look! The wood!"
"It's on fire!"
"And sweeping down on the gipsy camp!"
Barbara cried. "My hat!"

Jill!"

"Come on!" panted Clara Trevlyn. It was indeed a heart-stopping sight which met the startled eyes of the four chums of Cliff House as they plunged into Friardale Woods.

The woods were a furnace! From end to end, it seemed, they were alight. Like an advancing army, a great wall of flame was sweeping forward.

Fortunately Babs & Co. had approached

A dread thought was suddenly in their minds. Supposing Jill had run away? Supposing she was caught—

Instinctively eyes turned towards the fire. Like a red searing wall the flames were leaping at them. They saw frightened rabbits scattering before its path. They saw the great fountains of sparks. They saw the wide stream, dyed red as it reflected the darting flames. And then Babs shrieked.

"Look!"

Finger quivering, she pointed to the bridge.

Over that crazy bridge two forms suddenly shone out in the glow of the fire. One was the figure of a small girl, dragging desperately at the trailing body of a bigger girl.

"Jill!" shrieked Mabs.



FROM the pocket of the coat Miss Primrose brought to light the missing statuette. "Jill!" she cried, her voice quivering with anger. "But I didn't take it—I didn't!" Jill cried wildly.

of that angry roaring and crackling. Over the old footbridge that spanned the wide stream her stumbling footsteps took her—a girl fleeing from her own dreadful conscience. In front of her the redness danced.

And then, all at once she paused, choking and coughing. What was this heat—this smoke—this rushing light in front of her? What was this savage roaring, this hideous crashing and crackling in her ears? Like a girl who suddenly awakens from some horrible dream, Audrey came to herself, and stood rooted and petrified.

Her eyes grew wide with horror. From her parched throat came a sudden scream. Look! The wood—the wood—it was on fire—on fire—on fire! A great towering wall of flame, fanned by the wind which had suddenly sprung up, was rushing down upon her!

Audrey, with a cry, turned. And, turning, she struck her foot against a fallen branch. Helplessly she heeled over. She felt herself falling.

A scream left her lips. "Help—help!"
And then, a second later, she had crashed over—thud!

Against the same branch on which she had struck her foot, she struck her head. With a groan she collapsed.

And as, unconscious and helpless, she lay there, the five swept onwards towards her!

the wood from the leeward end. But immediately they saw the fire they were all filled with a most dreadful anxiety to reach the gipsy encampment.

Though still a quarter of a mile from the wide stream which ran near that encampment, they could see that the fire was perilously near it; could see that in a few minutes, unless it spent itself on the brink of the stream, that the camp would be entirely engulfed. Rushing showers of sparks rose skywards as they ran. A mass of smoke for a moment blotted everything out.

"Jill! Jill! Get to Jill!" cried Babs.

Coughing and spluttering, they sped on, groping a way through the smoke. At last they burst into the clearing.

"Jill!" screamed Babs.

She looked around her through the smoke, Gipsy George and Aunt Agnes, sweating and toiling, were feverishly harnessing horses to the caravans. Babs caught the gipsy's shoulder.

"Jill! Where's Jill?" she screamed above the roar of the flames.

"Out of my way!" roared Gipsy George.

"Her caravan door's open!" Leila cried. "It looks as if she's broken out! Jill! Jill!" She ran forward, emerging again with a white face. "She's not there!" she cried.

Then—

"And Audrey!" cried Clara.

They ran towards them. Then suddenly they saw the figure of Jill falling. Just in time they reached her, as, completely exhausted, she fell across the unconscious body of the girl she had dragged from the jaws of death itself. And just at that moment Audrey's eyes flickered open. They fastened in a long stare on Babs' face.

"Barbara!" she shuddered. "Barbara! Thank goodness you—you have saved me!"

Then she fell unconscious again.

THREE HOURS later. The scene was the sanatorium of Cliff House School. Once again Audrey Dashwood Verner, her singed hair testifying to the miraculous escape from death she had experienced, opened her eyes. They fell upon Babs, standing there with Mabs and Clara and Leila and Miss Primrose. They glowed. And she said again:

"Barbara, it was horrible! But you saved me! I shall never, never be grateful enough for that. How did you get me here?"

"We got you back on Gipsy George's caravan, Gipsy George and his wife are outside, Audrey. But, Audrey—"

"Yes, Babs?"

"It wasn't us who saved you. We only arrived when the saving had been done. It was—Jill!"

Audrey's eyes fastened upon her stupidly.

"Jill?"

"Jill—yes. You shut her up in her caravan, didn't you? She broke out. She ran after you, and then she found you, with the flames almost touching you. Without help she dragged you three or four hundred yards to safety. Audrey, if it hadn't been for Jill—"

She stopped. A convulsive shudder shook Audrey.

Jill! Jill, the girl to whom she had played traitor—the girl she had cheated! Jill had saved her!

She clenched her hands, thinking, thinking. She saw herself as a despicable thing—the girl who had tried to cheat a poor gipsy of her rights; who had been repaid for that act of heartless treachery by a magnificent heroism! Again she looked at Babs.

"And—and Jill—she is here?" she asked.

"She is outside, Audrey, with her—her relatives," Miss Primrose said. "She is only waiting to see if you are all right, and to say good-bye to you before she leaves. Would you like to see her now?"

"Please!" Audrey said, and, after a pause: "Let her aunt and uncle come in, too!"

"Clara, will you?" Miss Primrose asked.

Clara, understanding, went to the door. She opened it. Jill came in. Uncle George, mentally appraising the value of the picture in the silver frame above Audrey's head, shuffled after her, and after him, looking scared and uncomfortable, Aunt Agnes. With her eyes brimming with tears, Jill rushed across the room.

"Miss Verner!" she cried.

And she was down on her knees by Audrey's bedside. She was burying her face in the snowy bedclothes that were folded across Audrey's chest, sobbing, while Audrey, with an expression on her face that none had ever seen there before, lay still and mute.

And then suddenly one hand came out from beneath the bedclothes. Tremblingly for a moment it hung above the little one's head, and then, gently descending, caressed the black, glossy hair. Huskily she muttered:

"Jill!"

"Miss Verner," Jill said, and, as if ashamed at her outburst, rose to her feet. "I—I was so—so glad to see you all right!" she muttered. "I—I'm so sorry I forgot myself, but I'm going now, and—and I want to say good-bye."

"Good-bye!" Audrey muttered. "Good-bye!" Then: "No!" she cried shrilly, and sat up. "No, Jill, you're not going to say good-bye! Not now, nor ever any more. You're going to stop here at Cliff House with me!"

"Bless my soul!" Miss Primrose cried. "I believe the girl is delirious! Audrey—"

"Don't let her go!" Audrey begged desperately. "Never mind what anybody says! I know! Jill, would you like to stop here—always?"

"Oh, Miss Verner, you know I would; but—"

"But," scowled Gipsy George, "what

about Aunt Agnes and me, hey? Where do we come in? How can we go without our Jill, the apple of my eye and the cream of my life? All very well for you to talk, Miss Verner, but Jill belongs to us."

"She doesn't!" cried Audrey.

"Audrey!" Miss Primrose reproved again.

"She doesn't!" Audrey sat up, clasping Jill's hand. "You don't know, do you? But Jill's name isn't Jill Smith! Jill isn't a gipsy! Her name is Jill Verner, and she's my cousin!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Babs.

"Audrey—"

"Bless my soul!" Miss Primrose bent forward in agitation. "Audrey, my dear, calm yourself!" she said. "What is this strange idea you have in your head?"

"It isn't a strange idea!" Audrey said. "No, please let me sit up. Come here, please; I want you all to know. I want you all to hear. I want Barbara to prove it; I want Gipsy George to help to prove it. Jill Smith is Jill Verner," she added. "That is why I—I have been against her all the time. That is why I— Oh, I've been hateful! I've been a mean, crawling awful thing! But, thank goodness, now I can undo the mischief I have done!"

"But, Audrey, my dear, you can prove none of these things," said Miss Primrose, looking utterly bewildered.

"No, I can't. And why?" asked Audrey. "Be-because I destroyed the proofs. Yes, I did! I destroyed the locket which contained a portrait of Jill's mother—ask Babs. She found the remains after it had melted in the fire. I went last night to steal Jill's birth certificate from the tin box in her caravan. That is how I came to be caught in the fire. I succeeded. I burnt that birth certificate."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Clara.

"Then you knew all the time!"

"I knew," Audrey said, "from the moment I saw the arrow-shaped birth-mark on her arm. That was what first scared me. Then I was sure when I saw the locket which contained a portrait of Jill's mother, with Jill's mother's initials upon it—Allison Verner."

"My uncle, Mason Verner, who is Jill's father, had both those lockets made when Jill was born. One he hung round the baby's neck with a

photograph of its mother; the other he gave to his wife, containing a photograph of Jill. Later," Audrey added, "when he heard that his wife and child had been killed in a railway accident, and he adopted me because he was lonely, he gave me his wife's locket. The other was worn by the baby—"

She broke off sighing. Jill was standing, wide-eyed. Babs & Co. gazed at each other in wonder. There was a long, long pause. Then Gipsy George coughed.

"Which," he said, "the young leddie is right. It was my brother Jim who found Jill abandoned near the railway smash; it was him and his wife who brought her up as they would a daughter. Then when Jim left the country, Jill was left behind with me. But—but—hey, hey!" he broke off. "The young leddie fainted!"

And that was true. For Audrey, with a sudden cry, had pitched sideways, and would have fallen out of bed on to the floor, if Babs had not rushed forward just in time.

TWO WEEKS later.

Two girls sat on the bench under the old elms of Cliff House School, a small, black-eyed, black-haired girl, and a tall senior, with blonde hair. They sat very silent, very still, yet the young girl's hand was in the older girl's, and in the young girl's eyes was a look of most utter admiration as she gazed at her senior. The elder girl gulped.

"Jill, you are glad to be in the Upper Third at Cliff House?"

"Oh, Audrey, yes!"

"And—and you do not hate me for what I tried to steal from you?"

"No, Audrey. I—I love you," Jill smiled, "because, in the end, you did own up, didn't you? And it must have been awfully plucky to do that, thinking you would lose everything. And, after all," Jill said suddenly, "you weren't really doing me a bad turn, because I knew nothing about it. Audrey, don't let's say any more about it, please. And, look, here's Miss Redfern—I mum-mean Babs!"

And she rose to her feet, a glowing smile of welcome on her rosy face, as out of the school came trailing Babs, Mabs, Clara, Leila, and fat Bessie Bunter.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

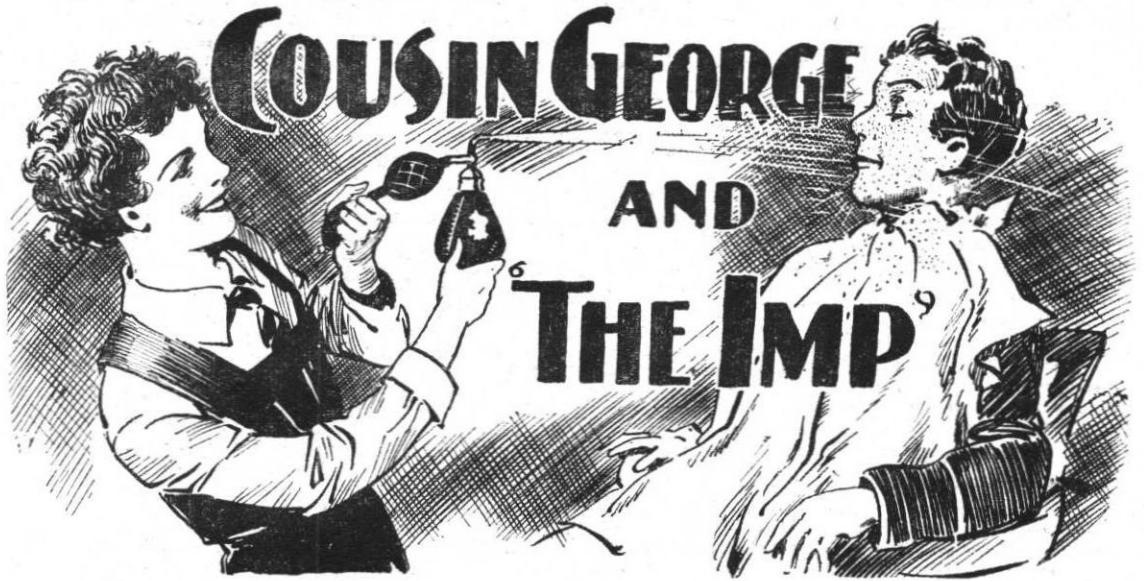


The FIREBRAND Finds a RIVAL!

Diana Royston-Clarke versus Faith Ashton!

What a clash of characters! Haughty, ambitious Firebrand, trampling roughshod over all opposition, against cunning, hypocritical Faith, the girl who once robbed her own cousin, Barbara Redfern, of the Fourth Form Captaincy. Diana and Faith are rivals for the leading role in the Fourth's new play, organised by the famous Co. Diana is given the part; Faith covets it. And that is the beginning of an amazing battle of wits between the two girls. Don't miss HILDA RICHARDS' latest superb story. It appears next week.

Here again, in another topping COMPLETE story of fun and excitement—



Tea for Twelve!

HETTY, I am going out this afternoon. I shall be out the whole afternoon, but please understand that you are not to take that as a hint that you can have the run of the house, and turn it into a bear-garden."

Hetty Sonning understood, but, being "the Imp" in name and behaviour, she could hardly repress a smile. Although her Aunt Miriam was not a tyrant, her word was law in the house, and her ideas of how spare time and half-holidays should be spent erred on the dull side.

"Yes, aunt," said Hetty meekly. "As a matter of fact, Cousin George and I are going to the circus this afternoon."

Hetty saw her aunt give a quick start, and pause with her gloves half drawn on.

"To the circus? Is George taking you to the circus?" asked Aunt Miriam. "He did not mention it to me."

Considering that George did not know it himself yet, he could not possibly have mentioned it. But the news would be broken to him at what the Imp considered the fit and proper moment.

"It's a grand circus, aunt!" said Hetty, with a glimmer of excitement in her eyes.

"Indeed! Well, I hope you will behave yourself, Hetty," said Aunt Miriam primly, "and live down the reputation you had at your boarding-school. Thank goodness George is a staid, sensible boy, and seems to have you well in hand."

Hetty looked solemn, for her own idea was that Cousin George was not the power in the land that he considered himself to be.

Aunt Miriam walked through the doorway and then paused, taking her notecase from her handbag.

Noting the action, Hetty's heart gave a jump of joy, for money to spend was what she wanted. She had four shillings, but after buying a seat and sweets, and going on the sideshows, there wouldn't be much left.

It was a pound note that Aunt Miriam took from her bag, and she gave it to Hetty, who almost reeled.

"Oh, aunt, thank you!" she stuttered.

Aunt Miriam widened her eyes. "Good gracious, that is not for you!" she said. "I want you to call in at the draper's—Mitchells—and pay this bill. Don't lose the money, whatever you do, and let me have the receipt when I come back."

"Yes, Aunt Miriam," said Hetty, her face falling.

"Good-bye, and remember"—Aunt Miriam paused—"best behaviour, Hetty, or you will be sent somewhere else—to a school where they will be relentlessly stern with you."

The Imp did not reply. There was no need. With that threat hanging over her, she had the best intentions in the world. For Hetty was a high-spirited girl who liked fun, and at her last boarding-school she had liked it just a little too much. Now, staying with Aunt Miriam and her Cousin George, she had to mind her p's and q's.

of pulling his leg. "You'd lose it. You know how careless you are, Cousin George. It was given to me to pay a bill at Mitchell's, the draper's."

"So that I could pay the bill, you mean," corrected Cousin George blandly. "Now, give it to me, and the bill. You'll lose it, and then there'll be a shindy, and you'll expect me to get you out of it."

The Imp did not argue. She gave him the note with the idea of placating him.

"There you are, and there's the bill," she said. "But if I haven't got that pound, I've got four bob of my own, and if you weren't a zookeer I know where we'd go."

"A zookeer?" said Cousin George sharply.

"That's what Bob Biggs called boys who—" And Hetty shrugged.

"Listen!" said Cousin George grimly,

"Huh! Hetty's only a girl. I'll soon manage her!" says Cousin George, in his lordly, over-confident way. But Hetty isn't called "the Imp" for nothing. When it comes to managing, she's even better than George. She even makes him have "measles."

But even so she took life lightly; managed to live up to her nickname. In a moment the slight clouds had vanished, and she went into the garden, wondering how to persuade Cousin George to go to the circus.

Cousin George, two years her senior, was apt to throw his weight about and treat her like a kid of five; but Hetty knew that he was quite young at heart, despite his somewhat up-stage, haw-haw, big brother manner.

"Has mother gone?" he asked loftily, when Hetty appeared.

"Yes; couple of minutes ago, George," said Hetty. "She gave me this pound note."

Cousin George looked at it and started.

"To give to me?" he said.

"To you? Goodness, no!" said Hetty, her eyes twinkling at the thought

almost fiercely. "I'm sick of hearing about this loon Bob Biggs, and I don't care what he called a 'zookeer.' There isn't such a word, anyway."

He was burning to know what a zookeer was, but Hetty did not tell him. She had invented it herself, just as she had invented that wholly imaginary person Bob Biggs, who was so smart and so wonderful compared with Cousin George.

"I think you must be a zookeer," she insisted. "Didn't Aunt Miriam say that when you were a kid you screamed at the circus?"

Cousin George went crimson. "What's that got to do with being a zookeer? Besides, I was only five, and the lion made a face at me. I'm not scared now. Gosh! Scared of lions behind bars! I love circuses."

"So do I," the Imp said quickly. "If Bob Biggs were here I'd go to the one at Lamwell, because I was never afraid with him around. Even if a lion got free, Bob would know what to do."

By IDA MELBOURNE

She turned away, and Cousin George, with thoughtful expression, tucked the pound note and the bill into his outside pocket.

Cousin George did not like Bob Biggs, and he did not like his cousin admiring such a fat-headed, swollen-nosed, conceited chump. A zooker! Huh!

"Just a minute, Hetty," he said. "I believe there is a circus at Lamwell. It's within cycling distance. If we go, do you promise not to get scared and scream or anything?"

Hetty turned back and wanted to hug him, but refrained. Underneath all his bluff, Cousin George was a dear, and she liked him a whole lot.

"Oh, Cousin George, I shouldn't be frightened with you!" she purred.

"Then we'll take the bill to Mitchell's, pay it, and be on our way. Get your things on, and be ready to start in five minutes," said Cousin George.

Five minutes later, almost skipping with joy, the Imp was ready. And ten minutes later they were outside Mitchell's. There Cousin George, groping in his pockets, turned white.

"The note and the bill," he said blankly. "Gone!"

"Gone!"

The Imp stared at him in horror, while he searched every pocket, but in vain.

"Oh, gosh!" he said. "I must have dropped it."

"Why, you silly goop, George!" said Hetty. "A pound note! Where did you drop it?"

Cousin George was crimson with shame, and Hetty felt a pang of sorrow for him.

"I—I don't know," he admitted ruefully. "I suppose I must have pulled it out with my silk hanky."

Hetty jumped on to her cycle.

"Come on!" she said. "You took that hanky out in the lane. I remember just about where."

"You do? Gosh, that's great!" said Cousin George, in relief.

Although it was one of his strictest rules that they cycle slowly, and with decorum, he allowed that rule to be broken now. They fairly scorched back to the lane. But there was no sign of the pound.

Cousin George, his lordliness vanished, gave a groan.

"If mother knows I've lost the note, gosh!" he said miserably. "That's the one thing she never forgives—carelessness with money. What are we going to do? The circus is off. I—I'm sorry, Hetty," he added contritely. "Can't be helped," sighed the Imp. "It's just our bad luck. We'll have to rake up the cash somehow. We're twelve bob short of the bill. But let's go home, just in case you used the swankerchief there."

They returned home, and searched the garden, but in vain.

"Twelve bob short," said George dismally, after they had counted their own cash. And then he glanced across the fence to the open fields, where some hikers were strolling. "Someone's picked it up. How'd it be to ask people?"

At that moment one of the hikers came strolling across towards the fence.

"Gosh, he's found the note!" babbled Cousin George, and rushed down to the fence, jumping half over it with eagerness.

But he was wrong, and he returned to Hetty with gloomy expression.

"Huh!" he said. "Wanted to know if there was anywhere here they could get tea? Here—in this road."

The Imp did not answer, but her eyes lit up.

"Cousin George," she said, "I've got it."

"What—the note?"

"No, the idea. We want twelve shillings, don't we?"

"Want it? We've just got to have it, or— Oh, gosh!" he ended wretchedly. "If you've got an idea, Hetty—"

But Hetty was gone. She had skipped upstairs to their Common-room. In one of the drawers of Cousin George's desk was some thick drawing-board.

Hetty put it to a very useful purpose. Taking out a bottle of indian ink, she got busy, writing one word in very large letters, and with great care.

"Teas" was the word, and after it, in smaller writing, she added, "One shilling." Then, "Bread-and-butter, and jam, cakes, etc."

While Cousin George searched the garden path and flower-beds, the Imp slipped down to the fence, and affixed the notice with drawing-pins.

"Twelve customers, and we're saved," she told herself.

Smart Work, But—

"VISITORS to tea?" said Cousin George, in surprise.

He had gone down the lane at the Imp's behest to search a supposed likely spot for the note—her ruse to get rid of him—and returned later, empty-handed.

But a surprise awaited him. Tea had been set on the lawn, and there were four complete strangers sitting at the table.

"Yes, visitors to tea," agreed the Imp, who was wearing a maid's apron. "It's the maid's afternoon out, George, and we've got to rally round."

George peeped into the garden.

"Did they give their names?" he said. "I can't remember seeing them before."

He followed Hetty into the kitchen, twittering with agitation, and she showed him an exercise-book on the front of which was written, "Visitors' Book."

BETWEEN OURSELVES



Your Editor's address is:—Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Please send a stamped, addressed envelope if you wish for a reply by post.

MY DEAR READERS,—I don't know whether I ought to say what's in my mind, in case things are totally different by the time you read these remarks, but— isn't the weather glorious? Or perhaps I should say, to be on the safe side, hasn't it been glorious these last few weeks?

Such perfect week-ends we've had, haven't we? Every Friday evening or Saturday morning we've met friends and relations and acquaintances going off with bags and trunks for those delightful little relaxations which we call "week-ends in the country or by the sea."

I've had one or two with Claudine, my niece. I believe I've told you about her before. She's the motor-car fiend, you know; the one who usually finishes up in some awful complication—and her passengers with her, if she's been fortunate enough to persuade anybody to be so rash.

Well, Claudine and I, together with her parents, had some delightful times at an old-world cottage they own. There was no car. By special request—from Your Editor—that was left at home. But Claudine—who seems to grow more of a madcap every day—staggered me considerably one afternoon by producing a very ancient tandem bicycle from somewhere or other, and, knowing that I had been something of an expert in my youth, insisting that we should have a spin.

"It'll be a ripping lark!" she said cheerfully.

I argued against it, but it's not easy to argue with Claudine when her mind is made up; so eventually I allowed myself to be persuaded. We set off, I

in front, Claudine behind. Really, I had had no idea how distant my cycling days were until that moment. I felt almost as if I'd never been on a bike before. We covered five miles—in a zigzag—and two miles as the road went—at least, that's the impression I got.

It must have been my niece's impression, too, for on the homeward spell she insisted on taking the front berth—and promptly landed us in a ditch! We arrived home after a two-hour hike. The old tandem is still in the ditch, I believe!

I do sincerely hope that YOUR holidays, whether week-ends or yours longer, don't finish up like that!

And now I really must tell you all about—

"THE FIREBRAND FINDS A RIVAL!"

which is next Saturday's magnificent LONG COMPLETE Cliff House story, by Hilda Richards.

The Firebrand of the Fourth is, as you know, Diana Royston-Clarke—a strange girl, a mixture of good and bad, but always tempestuous when roused; ruthless when her purpose is crossed. And how Diana loves the limelight! How she loves to be queen of all she surveys! And when she is actually given the title role in the Fourth Form's production of the "Queen of Sheba's Quest," Diana hardly needs to act. She IS the queen, on and off the stage.

But someone else covets Diana's part. You remember Barbara Redfern's cousin, Faith Ashton, of the angelic features and crocodile tears, who almost got Barbara Redfern expelled? Well, Faith returns to Cliff House, and is the one to cross Diana's path. What a battle! What a clash of characters! Firebrand, trampling roughshod over all opposition, versus cunning, hypocritical Faith! You'll be held spellbound by this great story. Babs & Co.—especially Mabs—are involved, too, so order your copy now!

Next week's number will contain all our usual features: "Cousin George and 'The Imp,'" "The Jungle Hikers," Patricia's Pages, and another Cliff House Pet. Well, cheerio for the present. With best wishes,

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

Opening it, he saw four signatures. "Mr. Hitcham, Miss Jones, Mr. Booker, and Miss Broad," he said. "I suppose they must be some of mother's literary circle."

"Aha!" said the Imp. "And more are coming, too. A nice thing, but we've got to rally round, Cousin George. I'll pretend to be the maid, and you'd better go upstairs and put on that dress suit your uncle left behind with the hole in the back."

Cousin George did not get it.

"What for? A dress suit in the afternoon? You must be potty. I hope you haven't been chattering to them in your silly way. Why not ask them indoors?"

"Because they've been walking in the fields," was the Imp's bland reply. "Here, take this tray-load out, and set the table."

"Me?" said George, in horror. "Set a table? I'm a boy, not a girl."

A voice called from the garden, and George hurried out. He was instantly hailed by a man with tousled hair, a healthy tan, and khaki shorts.

"Liven up, son! Is this what you call service?"

George walked forward and bowed. "I'm charmed to meet you," he said, in his best party manner.

The two young women giggled, and the man winked at them.

"Who wouldn't be?" he asked. "But never mind the charm; buck up with tea."

George stiffened.

"The maid is preparing tea at this moment," he said. "Mother, unfortunately, is out. Did she know you were coming, sir?"

The man gave a guffaw of mirth. "That's what I call service. If you want tea, tell us a day in advance. Young man, we've caught you on the hop—and lummy, here come some more."

Five people straggled into the garden. They smelled the flowers, and criticised the lay-out of the garden.

George walked up to them, his face grim.

"I say, I say!" he protested. "This is a bit thick. Didn't you see the notice?"

"That's why we came in," said a burly man with a truculent manner. "And who are you, anyway? Are you the manager?"

"Mum-manager?" babbled George. "Well, what are you—waiter? If this is the way you run the joint you don't deserve custom," said the man. "Suppose we do criticise the garden? Why shouldn't we, eh? Maybe we'll criticise the tea, too. That's up to you."

At that moment the Imp appeared with a tray.

"George!" she called. George, his brain in a whirl, turned. "Well?"

"Run in and make the tea. Kettle will be boiling," said Hetty.

"That's right, skip it," said the burly man. "Make yourself useful, somy."

George goggled from Hetty to the man, and then noticed three other people approaching the fence. From their manner it was pretty clear that they were intending to walk into the garden, by the unlatched gate.

But not if George knew it.

"Just a minute," he said to the burly man. "I think you're making a mistake. I don't want to have to chuck you out—"

"Oh, you don't?" said the man. "By gosh! Here, just a minute. If it comes to chucking out—"

He started to peel off his jacket, and

the Imp, suddenly alarmed, arrived at the double.

"Oh, please, sir, don't take any notice of him," she said, pointing to George. "He doesn't mean it. He'll ruin our trade, he will. Overlook it, please, sir, for my sake. If you knew all about him, you'd understand."

George was so staggered that he was speechless.

"There, there," the Imp said to him, soothingly. "Come inside," she urged, and then added in a whisper: "we're saved—saved!"

George, conscious of stares that were not without deep sympathy, suffered Hetty to lead him to the house. But inside he came to a halt.

"What is all this?" he demanded. "You practically told those people I'm barmy. They're not mother's friends. They're just coming here as though this were a tea-place."

Hetty smiled winningly. "And so it is."

George skipped in the air. "A tea-place—this! Don't be crazy! Are you selling these people tea?"

"At a bob a time," said the Imp quickly. "Oh, George, do be sensible. We've got to rake up twelve bob, and how else can we do it? Twelve people and we're saved, except for a little bread, butter, jam and cakes. And we've got eleven of them now!"

Cousin George choked. His eyes goggled.

"Hetty, you must be potty," he said in horror. "Suppose mother heard of it—suppose the neighbours notice—suppose—Oh gosh! But this is awful, shocking!"

"Twelve bob—and they won't be here an hour," said Hetty. "Anyway—it's done now, and you won't get them out without a fight. The notice says 'Teas,' and they've a right to demand it."

From outside came the rattle of a spoon against a cup.

"There—they'll start smashing up the place next," said Hetty. "Here—take this tray and the teapots."

Cousin George's eyes flashed. "I won't be a party to it," he hooted.

"It's the maddest, craziest idea—"

Hetty folded her arms. "All right—then turn them out," she said. "And explain to your mother how

you lost the note. I'm doing this for your sake, and this is all the thanks I get."

She marched into the kitchen, made the tea, and swept past him to the garden.

Cousin George looked out of the window. Four other customers had breezed in, but there was no table for them. Four shillings had walked into the garden!

It was a case of being hanged for a sheep as well as for a lamb! For if George's mother learned that the people had even been here, it would mean just as big a row, as if they had actually paid their money.

Upstairs he raced, charged into his room and took down the torn dress suit which his uncle had left behind on a visit. As a suit to wear at a dance it was useless; but for a waiter it would do quite well.

Cousin George changed at breakneck speed, and then with the fear in his mind that someone might recognise him, he went to his cupboard and routed out the grease paint and false moustache he used in amateur theatricals.

When he went downstairs he was in time to take out a tray to the customers.

"Buck up, George!" came a cry. "More hot water."

"He's grown a moustache!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cousin George put the tray down with a bang, his ears crimson. But when George played a part he played it well—as he had done in the school play.

"Tea for four," he said crisply. "Bread and butter and jam. Hot water, sir? Coming, sir."

George went back for the hot water.

"If this gets to mother," he said fiercely to Hetty, "she'll send you to that school. I've never heard—Coming, sir!" he shouted, and dashed out with the hot water, only to trip over his too long trousers and measure his length.

Meanwhile the Imp cut bread and butter, ladled out jam, cut cake, found a box of pastries, and decided to go next door for more.

Fourteen customers! And at a bob a head. It was something to sing about, and Hetty sang. Also, it was good fun. "Buck up, George!" she called from



Cousin George, still dazed at having to serve teas to hikers in his own garden, reeled out with a tray. Ironic cheers greeted his disguise. "Hi, he's grown a moustache!" someone roared. The Imp, looking on from behind the tree, chuckled. So far, so good!

the house. "More tea. And mind the step."

George, with dignity, took the tray to the new customers, where his moustache dropped into the milk.

"Bring some more milk!" grinned the customer. "But you can keep the moustache. Gosh, I've never laughed so much in my life. We must come here next week," he said to his friends.

George stiffened. "Next week?" he gaped.

"Yes, we'd better order what we want now, and maybe it'll be ready, then," chuckled the customer.

"Nu-next week," said George in horror, and he pictured an army of hikers arriving for tea when his mother was at home.

"That's too far ahead for him to grasp," said one of the girls kindly.

"But you can't come next week!" said George frantically. "Mother—I mean, we're closing down. We're bankrupt."

"Shame! But you can't wonder at it the way you go on. Mind the step, sonny."

George returned to the house, shaking at the knees, and then nearly jumped out of his skin as the telephone-bell rang.

"Hetty, the phone—mother!" he choked. "You answer it."

"You're the elder," said the Imp. "Gosh, don't I wish Bob Biggs were here! He'd know how to wait, and he wouldn't funk answering the phone."

George marched to the phone and unhooked the receiver.

"Mother—" he gasped. "Oh, no, no! Nothing's wrong. Of course not. Did I sound alarmed? Fancy that. I'm not alarmed. Good gracious, no!" he said, sweat standing out on his forehead.

"Alarmed? What should I be alarmed about? Ha, ha, ha! Him! What—coming home now? Now? Oh gosh! I mean—I mean, get all the fresh air you can, mother. Don't hurry. Everything's all right. Oh! You're coming right away. Now!"

He hung up the receiver and turned to Hetty, who stood silent beside him.

"That was mother," he said weakly. "She's coming home—at once—quarter of an hour at the most."

"A quarter of an hour?" gasped the Imp. "George, we've got to get rid of them! Serve the last tea. Quick!"

Putting George "On the Spot"!

THE customers were disinclined to go. They liked a rest after their tea, and they wanted music.

They wanted to dance on the lawn. And the more they wanted to stay the more panicky George became, the more comic grew his expression.

Some people do not know when they are not wanted—and these fourteen customers seemed to be of that order. They had had a good tea, and they should have been satisfied, but they were in no hurry to go. They dropped their cigarette-ends on the lawn, and they wanted to pick flowers, even offering to pay for them.

The Imp, indoors, sat racking her brains in despair.

"Well," said George grimly. "You see? A nice mess. And what do you do to get us out of it? Sit there sulking."

"I'm thinking," said Hetty. "A pity you didn't start sooner," said George. "If you had told me what you were going to do in time I would have stopped it. Of all the crass, stupid—"

"Oh, shut up!" said the Imp crossly.

"What did you say?" asked Cousin George very quietly.

"I said 'Shut up!'" said the Imp. "If you hadn't got them so worked up with your clowning they'd have gone. They're waiting to see you fall over again, or knock over a loaded tray."

Hetty jumped up. She really blamed herself, and she was quite near to tears of vexation; for she hadn't guessed that Aunt Miriam would come home early. And everything that Cousin George said seemed to be true. She had really and truly got them into the soup.

"If only I could think of something that would really make them go—a fire—"

"That's right, set light to the house," said Cousin George. "I think you had better stop thinking. It's up to me—"

The Imp swung round, face suddenly aglow.

"George, come upstairs. I've got the way out," she cried.

She rushed upstairs; and George, fearful that she might try out her dodge of a fire, followed her to the bathroom, where he found her with a scent-spray. From the bath-room she rushed to their Common-room and groped in a drawer.

"Now," she said, turning to him, "close your eyes!"

"What? Why? What foolery is this?" demanded George.

"Close your eyes," commanded Hetty. And something in her tone made him obey. Instantly it felt to him as though she had sprayed water on his face. Opening his eyes, he glanced at her hands. They were red.

"Wh-what's that?" he demanded in horror.

"Red ink. You've got measles," said Hetty. "Go out on the lawn—quick, quick! The rash is just showing."

Stupefied, Cousin George remained still; then he leaped to action and clattered down the stairs and into the garden. Only a moment later Hetty emerged with a tray.

"How's the head, George?" she asked.

"Head? Awful!" he groaned, and put a hand to it. "And my throat, too."

In silence the customers watched as Hetty approached him, stared at him, and then recoiled in horror.

"George," she cried, "you've got it! The rash is just showing. I told you not to go near that boy. Oh my goodness—measles!"

The customers rose to their feet as one person, and there came a babel of voices.

"Oh, poor George! That's why he's been half-delirious," said Hetty.

"Measles!"

"Oh, well," shrugged George, playing up, "I don't mind now I know! But I may have given it to no end of people."

"Bill, please!" said a man.

"My bill," said another.

As George approached the tables the customers backed. Solemnly he gathered up the things, and, having suffered much, decided to have his revenge. He insisted on walking near to people, and one man backed into the lily pond and went up to his knees in water. He was the burly one.

Inside five minutes fourteen shillings had been paid, and three-and-sixpence left in tips. The hikers hurried out at speed, and left the garden in a state of peace.

"It worked—it worked!" cried Hetty. "Oh golly! Saved, George! We'll have to get bread-and-butter, jam, cakes, tea. But we're saved."

"Not unless we clear this stuff," beamed George. "That was a pretty smart idea, Hetty," he admitted.

"Oh, one of Bob Biggs!" said Hetty lightly. "Now, he really was a boy with ideas. Buck up, George!"

They took in the trays, they took in the tables; they cleared the cigarette-ends, and then rushed for the washing up—and George did not pretend that he did not know how.

Three minutes after they had put away the last piece of crockery they heard a banging at the front door.

George hurled himself upstairs to change, and the Imp whipped off the maid's cap and apron; then she rushed to the door and opened it.

A small boy stood there, a slip of paper in his hand.

"From Mitchell's," he said. "Receipt!"

"Receipt! But they haven't had the money!" Hetty gasped.

"Someone brought it into the shop with the bill—said they'd found it in the lane," said the boy.

Hetty looked at him, looked at the receipt, and then roared with laughter; then, giving the surprised boy sixpence, she charged upstairs as George came charging down. They collided and sat down sprawling.

"Cousin George! Look!" Hetty cried, holding up the receipt, and then she explained.

"Good gracious!" George murmured. Hetty laughed.

"Well, we're seventeen-and-sixpence up, and no harm done. And it was fun, too—jolly good fun!"

Cousin George's icy calm vanished.

"Looking back—so it was," he said. "Especially when they bunched. Ha, ha, ha! That was an idea!"

At that moment they heard Aunt Miriam's car. Aunt Miriam arrived as though expecting to find the house a heap of ashes; but, although she went on a tour of inspection, nothing was wrong.

"Well, fancy staying in and having tea on the lawn on such an afternoon! Oh, is that the receipt from Mitchell's, Hetty? Thank goodness! I've been on hot bricks all the afternoon thinking about it. I really should have given it to George. However—"

Cousin George had the grace to go a little pink.

"Oh, mother," he said, "I wonder if I might take Hetty to the circus this evening? It's an early house."

"The circus? By all means, George. But look after her; don't let her get into mischief."

"Certainly not!" said George. "I can handle Hetty."

But, all the same, they had some rousing fun, although it was not until they got home that George realised what rousing fun it had really been. However, he had proved that he was not a "zooker," and that was what mattered—and he had stayed on the joy-wheel longer than Bob Biggs!

"And that," said Hetty, with a sigh, as they reached home, "is what I call a real half-holiday."

"What-ho!" said George. "I mean, what homework have you? I should have enjoyed the show myself if I were your age, I dare say. However, you'll grow up. One mustn't expect too much from you all at once."

And, whistling, he lounged off to his room.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

ANOTHER complete laughter-story featuring this delightful pair of fun-makers next week! Do please let your Editor know exactly how much you like them, and be sure to recommend them to all your friends.

Further fascinating chapters of our wonderful adventure story—

The JUNGLE HIKERS



FOR NEW READERS.

TERESA FORRESTER, self-possessed and resourceful, and
 LUISE RAYMOND, her more timorous chum, are on their way to meet Teresa's parents in Africa when they become stranded. With a quaint native girl, FUZZY, as guide, they set off by canoe. The canoes were stolen by Fuzzy from a warlike tribe, who came in pursuit of the chums! They escape, but miss their steamer and continue by foot. When they help a white hunter, he gives them a talisman ring, which allows them to enter a native king's country. Teresa exposes a treacherous magician. The king gives them all jewels. Fuzzy decides to stay—only to be captured by the queen.
(Now read on.)

Adolphus Does the Trick!

"WHY, what ever's the matter with them?" Teresa exclaimed. For, not having heard Fuzzy's stifled cry for help, she was naturally surprised when Adolphus, the chimpanzee, turned anxiously, and Bambo, the elephant, halted. "They don't want to go on without Fuzzy," said Luise. "Oh, Terry, How awful! I really thought she would come after us."
 "And I did," sighed Teresa. "Fancy her being turned like that. 'Just for a handful of silver he left them, just for a riband to stick in his coat,'" she quoted from a poem learned at school. "Don't!" begged Luise. "I was so fond of Fuzzy. And now she's changed. I'd never have believed that money could spoil anyone so quickly. And, after all, jewels are just money."
 Teresa gave a nod, and then urged Bambo on.
 "You're not waiting?" said Luise.
 "No. She can catch us up if she wants to," shrugged Teresa, whose pride was wounded. "We can't make her come, and we don't want her if she has to be made."
 But both secretly wished that they could go back just to see what was happening.
 If they had done so, they would have found Fuzzy being dragged to the

dungeons. They would have seen her jewels being torn from her by the angry queen.

But they could not even guess that such a thing was happening; they had not seen the queen, who, during their visit, had been resting.

"Ah, well. I hope our jewels will bring us happiness. I hope they aren't unlucky," murmured Teresa.

Luise was wondering that, too. She did not bring out her jewels even though she yearned to study them carefully, because there were soldiers in attendance, warriors sent by the king as escort until they hit the trail, the broad path that could not be mistaken.

Teresa knew well enough how tempting the jewels were; for even here they had exchange value. Food, clothing, arms, and luxuries could be bought in exchange for them, and even the simplest native knew their value.

The Jungle Hikers Outwitted the Rascally Witch Doctor Once—but Now He Plans His Revenge!

Trying not to think of Fuzzy, Teresa and Luise spoke of other things, of England, of school, of the journey ahead and how long it would take.

Adolphus, perched on Bambo's back, could not talk, and was out of it. Being only a baby chimp, he had not highly developed thinking powers, but he did know that Fuzzy was missing.

Three or four times he chattered to Teresa, trying to point out the fact.

But she did not seem to understand his language, and even though he went to the trouble of hanging by one foot from the luggage, and pulling her hair, it did not wake her up to the fact that Fuzzy was not with them.

Adolphus, in frowning silence, decided to act. He, too, was fond of Fuzzy, but he did not know about jewels and princesses and swollen head.

Slipping down from Bambo unnoticed, he dodged away, and then, at high speed, made for the palace, where he had last seen his young mistress.

Fuzzy was still there. But she was no longer the gay, proud Fuzzy, wearing sparkling diamonds, and carrying the chain and insignia that proved she was a princess.

Frightened and wide-eyed, she sat in a cold, dark dungeon—a room below ground level, with a grid across the top, and hardly distinguishable from a lion trap.

Above stood the queen, looking down at her in anger, speaking a language which Fuzzy understood.

"Worthless nothing, a slave! You wear jewels? No, no, I wear jewels! Princesses wear jewels. But not you. No, no!"

Fuzzy's eyes filled with tears as she looked up.

"King Nompanyo give me jewels," she said pathetically. "He make me princess."

"And I—I take them back," said the queen angrily. "Jewels are not for such as you, a slave girl."

"I am not slave!" cried Fuzzy, in fury.

In such a temper was the queen, that she picked up a pitcher of water and upended it into the pit. Only by a sudden jump did Fuzzy avoid being drenched. It was the queen's last word, and she went away still in anger.

Fuzzy looked up at the trees through the cross grating of her dungeon, and quivered. Only five minutes ago she had thought herself a princess. And now, here she was in a dungeon—a prisoner, a slave.

Fuzzy knelt down, clasping her hands and groaning.

"Oh, Miss Teaser—Miss Luise!" she

By
**ELIZABETH
 CHESTER**

sobbed. "Oh, come back plenty quick! Oh, come back!"

But she knew that her voice could not be heard, that they had gone on without her.

For fifteen minutes she knelt there in silence, and then a soft voice called down.

"Princess—"

Fuzzy looked up, and saw one of the girls who had been given to her as a slave.

"Yes?" whispered back Fuzzy sadly. "Bad thing go happen to white girls," the slave whispered.

"Bad thing?" said Fuzzy anxiously. "Magician make trap for them," whispered the girl. "Take jewels—"

Then she hurried away as she heard some sound of danger; and Fuzzy detected the angry voice of a guard shouting at the girl.

"Take jewels," murmured Fuzzy anxiously. "Magician he trap Teresa and Luise. Oh, oh, and I am prisoner!"

She wailed again in despair. Her friends were in danger, and she could not give them warning. She could do nothing at all to help them.

Several times Fuzzy jumped, trying to clutch the grid of wood above, but she could not reach it, and so she sank down again. It was not until some minutes later that she took heed of an odd noise above. Even when she looked up she did not at once recognise the face she saw.

Then she turned her head sideways, blinked, and sprang up.

"Dolphus!"

Adolphus, cute little chimp that he was, had found her. But, even so, he could not get in through the grid, although he kept walking across it, trying to do so.

"Dolphus!" breathed Fuzzy fearfully. "Not let um catch you, Dolphus. Hark!"

But Adolphus had already heard approaching steps, and he dodged away

in alarm. He had not sense in the human meaning of the word, but he had keen instincts, and he could usually tell an enemy a dozen yards off without even looking. And the person who came now was an enemy.

It was the angry queen, fat and glowering.

She stalked to the grid, and leaned down, calling to Fuzzy:

"I bring you work to do! Not until it is finished do you get food to eat. Here are many beads. Here is thread. Put all the beads on to the thread, and between each a knot."

"Happily, O queen," said Fuzzy.

The queen opened the grid, knowing that Fuzzy could not jump up and escape.

"Here I give you cloth," she said. "Needle, thread. Make garment with it when beads are finish."

Down came the cloth, to land with a bump.

Fuzzy looked up tearfully, expecting to see the grid closed down; but a quite amazing thing happened.

The angry queen, kneeling down and peering into the dungeon, suddenly let out a piercing cry not unlike the yelp of a dog. Then, throwing out her hands, she clutched the grid and lurched forward. Next moment she had fallen through, the grid had slammed shut, and there she hung from it inside the dungeon, her feet clear of the ground, her eyes wide with fright.

And from above Adolphus looked down, trying hard to smile, for this wonderful display of agility on the part of the queen had been his doing.

Alone Adolphus had done it. Just a nip with his sharp teeth, and the queen had shot forward—another nip, and there she was in the dungeon. When one knew now it was really absurdly simple, and Adolphus looked about him for others.

Fuzzy did not know quite how it had happened, but she did not worry. What

she did know was that the grid was shut but unfastened, and that the queen was with her in the dungeon.

Gasping and wheezing, the queen dropped to the ground, then struggled up a little shakily.

If Fuzzy had delayed or hesitated she would have remained there with the queen, at too close quarters for comfort.

But Fuzzy had quick wits, and she desperately wanted to escape.

Even as the queen struggled up Fuzzy jumped on to her back.

The queen, still a little unsteady, yelled and shouted, but Fuzzy was now standing on her shoulders, and had grasped the grid. She hurled it up and back, and then, putting one bare foot on the queen's head, forced herself up to the top of the dungeon beside Adolphus, who chattered with glee.

Fuzzy looked down at the dazed, bewildered queen, who seemed unable even yet to take stock of this odd situation.

"You finish off beads," said Fuzzy sternly, "or not come out—you finish cloth, or not come out! Buck up!"

And then she closed down the grid, turned the heavy key in the lock, and, having no further use for it, threw it far into the bushes.

"Now," she whispered to Adolphus, and, crouching low, sped away for the jungle path.

The queen, not more unfortunate than she deserved to be, shouted and called, and the guard came near. He was not a man of acute hearing, for only half-deaf men, unlikely to be disturbed by the outcries of prisoners, were chosen for the task.

Although only faintly, he nevertheless heard a noise, and knew his duty. That morning, but a short while ago, the queen herself had given commands:

"Should the prisoner cry out, then throw in water. If still she cry out, throw in earth. If yet again, throw in stones."

The queen cried out, and the dutiful guard, mindful of his royal mistress' commands, threw in water. And next he threw in earth.

But he had no occasion to throw in stones. The queen had as good a memory as he, and she did not wish to be stoned. So, in shaking rage, she remained in the dungeon—silent, torn between a fear of keeping silent, and thus remaining there a prisoner for days, or calling out and being stunned by stones.

And if there was anything further that added to her unhappy plight it was that she was standing barefooted on small beads.

Where is Luise?

"NOT a sign of Fuzzy," said Teresa. "Bambo's slowing up."

"Yes; and Adolphus isn't too happy, although he's been quiet for some time," murmured Luise.

She looked up on top of the load of luggage, and, noticing that there was no sign of Adolphus, hurried round to the far side. Then, in growing alarm, she went back down the path, calling for him.

The solemn warriors watched her, and one of them pointed and jabbered. But they did not know English, and it was hard to explain.

"Chimpanzee?" asked Teresa, when she suddenly realised that Adolphus was lost. "Monkey!"

The warriors shrugged. One of them had seen Adolphus escape, and had told the others. They had debated whether it was a thing worth mentioning or not,

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and by the time they had decided that it was, it was too late to be any good. "How can we make them understand 'monkey'?" asked Luise fretfully. "Poor Adolphus."

The warriors were wondering the same thing, and one of them started to walk like a chimpanzee, his arms trailing the ground, his legs bent.

"Yes, yes! That's it. But where?" asked Teresa, and, to suggest the question, spread her hands.

The warriors pointed down the path. "When—how long ago? How far back?" asked Teresa; but soon realised that it was not a question which could be explained in dumb show very easily. "We'll have to turn back," she decided worriedly. "We can't lose Adolphus as well as Fuzzy."

But as there seemed to be a chance that Adolphus was not far behind, and perhaps only lurking amongst the trees, taking fruit, Teresa suggested that Luise should stay with Bambo while she hurried back.

"Don't go far," exclaimed Luise. "Only a minute," nodded Teresa.

She ran back a dozen yards, calling Adolphus, clucking her tongue, and whistling; but, naturally, she found no sign of him. For a few yards more Teresa wandered back, then halted, having already come rather more than she had originally intended.

"Halloooo—Luise!" she called. "Just coming back. You all right?"

There was no reply, and Teresa, slightly agitated, turned back.

But she knew that in this vast, strange country, with such gigantic trees and odd freaks of Nature, it would not be unusual for her voice to carry no more than a few yards in one direction, yet hundreds in another.

Teresa went back at a trot. She travelled a hundred and fifty, two hundred yards.

"Came farther than I thought," she mused, surprised. "No wonder she couldn't hear me."

There was a bend just ahead, and she rounded it, then pulled up with a jerk, for ahead of her was a clear path, wide and straight, stretching into the distance, with a blue mountain far beyond.

Teresa had never seen that mountain in her life before. She had never seen this part of the path either, and she swung round, a tight spasm of fear gripping her heart.

"My golly! Where have they gone? Where are they?" she gasped. "Luise!"

A bird chirped above and fluttered away noisily. A small monkey threw a nut down, and from somewhere to the south came the roar of a lion.

Teresa felt that she stood alone in the jungle—alone as regards human life, although surrounded by animals. Her voice mocked back at her, and her own steps reverberated hollowly as she ran.

"They can't have gone on!" she gasped. "They can't be out of ear-shot! Then where—"

She dropped to the ground and listened. The sound of running steps came to her clearly, and she moved forward and back to test their direction.

Rising, she swung round the way she had come and hurried on. In some strange way she had overshot the spot where she had left Luise and the warriors, and now, as she headed towards those hurrying steps, she looked for tell-tale marks on the ground.

Bimbo left heavy footprints when the ground was soft; but in longish grass, as it was here, there was little trail.



"LOOK! Adolphus—with our tin!" cried Teresa. And while Fuzzy tried to coax the baby chimpanzee towards them, her eyes gleamed excitedly. Were they on the trail of their missing chum?

But Teresa used her eyes, and presently saw grass slowly rising as if it had been bent down. It was the movement that drew her attention, and she went to the spot and studied it carefully.

The grass, having been pressed down by the weight of Bambo and the others, was slowly reasserting itself and rising; behind, it was practically in its old place.

"Here—they've been here only a few seconds ago," said Teresa, bewildered.

"But where are they? They don't seem to have gone on in any direction. They just seem to have disappeared."

Then the sound of running steps and hard breathing came nearer, and Teresa, not knowing who it might be, friend or foe, dodged quickly aside. Just in time. Into view came a black runner.

Teresa caught a glimpse of the person and then jumped forward, eyes sparkling.

"Fuzzy!" she cried.

Fuzzy Was Right!

"FUZZY!" As Teresa gave that glad shout, Fuzzy pulled to a halt. She could not speak at once for gasping and panting, for she had been running most of the way, and carrying Adolphus on her back.

Adolphus scrambled down and greeted Teresa with excited chattering. Possibly he was trying to explain about the queen and the pit, but Teresa just patted him and then hugged Fuzzy.

"Oh, Fuzzy, I'm so glad you're back! So glad!" she said happily. "And you left your jewels, and even the princess' badge? Or have you got them tucked away somewhere?"

Fuzzy's face worked. She gulped, she swallowed, and then, clinging to Teresa, she wept bitterly.

"Fuzzy—Fuzzy, what happened? You were robbed—waylaid?" asked Teresa.

She had warned Fuzzy of that, but she did not rub it in.

"Queen tooked um back!" wailed Fuzzy miserably. "Put me in dem dungeon."

"Did she, then?" whistled Teresa.

"And we didn't even see her. Lucky we didn't, maybe. And did she take all your jewels?"

"Yes, yes; all," said Fuzzy. "But, Miss Teaser," she broke in, "me hear tell bad men go make trap for you. Magician. Him want steal jewels."

Teresa stiffened. "The magician does? How did you hear that?"

The magician was her enemy. Considering that she had unmasked him to the king as an impostor, Teresa could not expect him to be a friend; but she had not really thought that he would take vengeful action against her.

"Where is he, then?" she asked sharply.

"Not know," admitted Fuzzy. "But him plenty bad. Him go find you take jewels."

Teresa glanced about her.

"My golly, I wonder! The magician, eh? He could have got this far." She clutched Fuzzy's arm. "Fuzzy, Luise has disappeared—vanished!"

"Varnished?" said Fuzzy quickly. "Like 'im table top?"

"No; gone—gone—where I don't know," said Teresa, and explained what had happened, then showed Fuzzy the tracks that had been made, and how they seemed to end suddenly.

"But something must have happened to them. They either went on, or turned left or right," said Teresa blankly. "They didn't drift up into the sky."

"No, no," Fuzzy agreed. "Bambo him too much big."

"Then where is he? Where is Luise?" asked Teresa.

There seemed no answer in theory, and their one hope was to call out at the top of their voices, and to run about hunting for the slightest clue.

"Keep together," warned Teresa. "If we separate it'll be dangerous. We must think—think and listen."

Fuzzy was trembling slightly with fright, for this seemed to her magic. Teresa had proved the magician was only a fraud, and yet what strange things magicians could do! Fuzzy herself had seen amazing and wonderful things.

Simple-minded Fuzzy was immensely credulous, and she really believed that

she had seen a magician take an egg from a man's ear after putting it into his own mouth. Sleight of hand meant nothing to Fuzzy. She had actually seen the thing done.

And now, in some similar way, Bambo and Luise had been spirited away.

But Teresa did not believe in magic, only in common sense, and there had to be some simple, common sense explanation of this seemingly miraculous disappearance.

"Luise must be terrified," she murmured in great agitation. "Yet she doesn't call out. Not a sound. And I can't even hear the crashing of feet, such as Bambo would be certain to make here."

Fuzzy listened, and dropped to the ground.

"Hear tings," she murmured. "Hear tings."

Adolphus listened, too, and clawed at the ground.

"He thinks the sounds come from down under," said Teresa, with a faint smile. "He does not realise that they travel along the ground."

But Fuzzy did not answer. She was lying flat, her right ear pressed hard to the ground, her eyes wide. Then suddenly she stood up.

"Missa Teascr!" she cried wildly. "Listen, listen!"

Teresa dropped down and listened, while Fuzzy, hardly breathing, watched.

"Hear shout?" asked Fuzzy. Teresa heard a hollow, echoing sound, definitely a shout. Scrambling up, she looked to right and left.

"Odd," she murmured. "It can only mean that Luise is in hiding somewhere—"

Fuzzy pointed to the ground. "Down below," she said. "Way down below. Noise dey come up. Miss Luise—she done gone down below de ground."

"Down below the ground?" Teresa echoed incredulously. "Impossible! How could they get down through the solid earth, Fuzzy?"

If the situation had not been so grave, Teresa could have laughed at that idea; for the ground was hard and solid, and there was apparently no way through.

But Fuzzy insisted, and ran to and fro, pausing only to press her ear to the ground and listen intently.

Teresa, perplexed when she herself listened again, kept staring at the grass about her. For now she gradually became convinced herself that the sounds really came from below.

The idea did come to her that it might be some odd trick of sound, a sort of illusion.

But to Fuzzy, on the other hand, there was only one explanation, absurd though it might sound. Luise, Bambo, and the warriors were down below in some kind of tunnel!

Adolphus, having listened and dug in vain, ran to and fro as though everything depended upon him, only he couldn't remember just what to do at the moment.

But Fuzzy was not in doubt. She snatched Teresa's arm and tugged it.

"Big place way under," she said eagerly. "Big—how you call say—hole in ground; long hole-like funnel of stone!"

"Funnel," said Teresa. "Funnel," corrected Fuzzy. "Ting smoke come from."

"Yes, that's a funnel, all right," agreed Teresa. "But when something like a funnel goes through the ground,

HILDA RICHARDS

REPLIES

to some of her correspondents

MURIEL ROUTLEDGE (Kilmarnock, Scotland).—How nice of you to write to me once more, Muriel! My pet 'Alsatian, Juno, is very well, thank you, and doing a lot of swimming these days. She sends a "woof" to Toby. (He's evidently a very chummy little dog. I expect you wish he were your own!) I shall look forward to another letter from you before long.

"BRENDA" (West Derby, Liverpool).—Many thanks for a charming little letter, my dear. You would be in the Second Form if you went to Cliff House. Mabs is aged fourteen years and six months—the same age as Babs. I will certainly feature Rosa and Diana in my future stories, Brenda. (In fact, I'm writing one at the moment in which Diana plays a big part. Though that's supposed to be a secret—until your Editor tells you!)

"ARELENE" (Northern Ireland).—So glad to hear from such an enthusiastic reader, my dear. You would be in the Fourth Form, with Babs and her chums, if you went to C.H. Your pet, Major, sounds very sweet. Give him a pawshake from my dog, Juno, won't you?

JOAN ELLERINGTON (Hull).—Thank you very much for writing again, Joan. I was most pleased to hear from you. You certainly had some lovely birthday presents—lucky girl! Do write again when you have time, my dear.

JEAN KATH (Derby).—So glad to hear from you, my dear, and to know you are enjoying my stories. Yes, I'm sure you will long to remain a keen reader. Write again, and do tell me more about yourself, Jean.

"MONICA" (Belstead, Suffolk).—Thank you so much for writing again, Monica. I was delighted to hear from you. I hope to feature Janet Jordan again before long. My dog, Juno, is very well, thank you, my dear. Yes, she is rather like Clara's pet, Pluto, in appearance.

DIANA ASHLEIGH (Buenos Aires, Argentina).—What a very charming little letter, Diana! Although you live a long way from England, you are evidently a very enthusiastic reader of our paper. So Jimmy Carstairs is your particular favourite? She has many admirers among my readers, I'm sure.

KATHLEEN BATTEN (Shaw, Lancs).—Many thanks for writing, Kathleen. Yes, you would be in the Lower Third if you went to C.H. Clara's lovable pet, Pluto, is now aged seven—just in his prime, isn't he? I'll certainly be featuring Marjorie some time in the near future, my dear.

it's called a tunnel. But you don't seriously mean that there's a tunnel under here!" she added, perplexed. "Where is the entrance, for goodness' sake?"

Fuzzy did not know, but she explained to Teresa that she had heard stories about a big tunnel, that her tribe had heard of it, and that it belonged to King Nompnyo.

Fuzzy's tribe, as Teresa had already gathered, knew hundreds of legends.

They knew who had made the moon, and when and why certain stars had quarrelled, and what happened to the sun when it set. Almost nothing was hidden from them. But Teresa did not believe such yarns, and this seemed really no better than the rest.

"Well, we'll look," she said. "There might possibly be a tunnel, and if there is, then the entrance can't be far away."

She and Fuzzy kept close together as they searched. In silence they ran to and fro, searching the ground, hacking through undergrowth.

Fuzzy startled a lioness, who went snarling away from a lonely lair. Teresa had a monkey drop on her shoulders. But apart from these and other adventures, they drew blank in their search.

Then came a chattering from Adolphus, and he rushed into view carrying a biscuit tin.

"Adolphus—where did you get that?" cried Teresa, in excitement. "Fuzzy—our tin!"

Adolphus swung the tin to and fro in glee, and Fuzzy took his free paw, and asked him questions. Adolphus dragged her, and they went rushing away.

Teresa, following more slowly, heard Fuzzy give a shout.

"Bambo!"

Teresa hardly cared whether she fell or what had happened to her. She rushed on, and only slowed when she saw Bambo through the tregs.

The young elephant stood, breathing hard, head swinging, and his precious load, which they had arranged and balanced so carefully, was now lopsided and lacking some of the things.

"Bambo—if only you could talk Where's Luise?" asked Teresa.

There was no sign of Luise, and Fuzzy, rushing in all directions and calling, could get no answer.

Bambo, being unable to talk, could not give them even a hint of what had happened, yet it was obvious from his appearance that he had charged off into the thicket, and, banging against trees, disturbed his load.

"He bolted," said Teresa decisively and in growing alarm. "But what happened to Luise—and what made him bolt?"

And as she stood there, conjecturing, a disturbing thought came. Suppose Luise had been captured by the magician.

Now Adolphus was rushing around excitedly. His animal sense was a better guide than their human reasoning, and of a sudden he came to a halt and started tugging at a thick bush.

Teresa sped to him, arriving with Fuzzy and almost cannoning into her. "It's the tunnel!" she cried.

On the far side of the bush was a gap, and Teresa, crouching low, crept in. Groping forward with her foot in the darkness of the centre, she felt the earth slip away, and presently her foot touched space, emptiness.

"Fuzzy, you were right," she said in awe. "It's a tunnel. And that's where Luise is! A tunnel under the ground. My golly—but why—who captured her?"

Teresa, as she spoke, took out her jewels and carefully hid them in another large bush, marking the spot with a stone.

"Now," she said, her face pale and set. "We've got to go down. If you don't want to, Fuzzy, you needn't. But I'm going."

Fuzzy, in offended tone, looked at Teresa, and then pushed past her.

"Me go first," she said.

But suddenly she gave a gasp of horror, then disappeared completely from sight.

WHAT ever has happened to Fuzzy?

On no account should you fail to read next Saturday's chapters of this enthralling story.